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Rethinking Abelard

A Collection of Critical Essays

Edited by

Babette S. Hellemans



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Preface

On 13 July 2011 a meeting was held at the International Medieval Conference in Leeds, UK, to study new interdisciplinary approaches to the work of Peter Abelard (1079–1142). Scholars from different disciplines were invited to present their papers focusing on various texts of the Abelardian corpus. The editor would like to record her gratitude to the Nicholas Mulerius Foundation, a charitable organization dedicated to promote internationalization of scholarship at the University of Groningen, which sponsored the organization of this undertaking. Special thanks go to the general editor of *Brill's Studies in Intellectual History*, Han van Ruler. I would also like to thank Laura Vollmer and Rosanna Woensdregt who helped a great deal in the final stages of the preparation of the manuscript. Finally, the volume benefited considerably from the comments of the anonymous readers for Brill Academic Publishers in Leiden.

Babette S. Hellemans

Note on Contributors

Michael T. Clanchy

is Emeritus Professor of Medieval History at the Institute of Historical Research, University of London. He is the author of *Abelard: A Medieval Life* (Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford 1997) and *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066–1307* second edition (Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford 1993). He specializes in the history of literacy and scholasticism in the central Middle Ages and also in law and politics in medieval England.

Peter Cramer

gained his PhD at the University of Sheffield. He published a study on the shifting perceptions and effects of baptism in the early Middle Ages in *Baptism and Change in the Early Middle Ages, c. 200–c. 1150* (Cambridge University Press, 1993; 3rd ed. 2003). Cramer further published on aspects of memory, materiality and style in European art and literature from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries, and also on the relation between history and fiction in various periods. He teaches History, History of Art and Literature at Winchester College in the UK.

Lesley-Anne Dyer

did her PhD in Philosophy at the University of Notre Dame, 2011 and MPhil, University of Cambridge, 2005. She is a Thomas Jefferson Society Postdoctoral Fellow of Religious Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. Dyer is currently working on a book entitled, *Translating Eternity in the Twelfth-Century Renaissance: From Anselm to Bernard Silvestris* for the press of the Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies in Toronto. Her research centers upon the philosophical theology of eternity and time in the medieval Platonic tradition.

Juanita Feros Ruys

is the Director of the Sydney Node of the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions at the University of Sydney. She is the author of a forthcoming edition, translation, commentary, and study of Abelard's *Carmen ad Astralabium* and *Planctus*, and has published numerous papers on the rhetorical strategies employed by Abelard and Heloise in their writings. Feros Ruys is currently working on a book on the attribution of emotions to demons in the High Middle Ages and is collaborating on a book dealing with suicidal emotions in the Middle Ages.

William Flynn

is Lecturer in Medieval Latin at the University of Leeds. His research interests concern the interactions among liturgy, music and theology. He published *Medieval Music as Medieval Exegesis*, a performing edition of Hildegard of Bingen's *O frondens virga*, articles on music and liturgy and a chapter on Liturgical Music in the *Oxford History of Christian Worship*.

Babette S. Hellemans

gained her PhD in Anthropological History at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris, and in the Humanities at Utrecht University. She is Lecturer in Cultural and Medieval History at the University of Groningen. Hellemans has published on cultural, historiographical and intellectual themes such as the anthropology of eschatology in western medieval culture, including modern theories of temporality, semantics and images. She is the author of *La Bible Moralisée: une oeuvre à part entière. Temporalité, sémiotique et création au XIII^e siècle* (Brepols, 2010), and presently she is completing a monograph on Peter Abelard. Babette Hellemans is Project Leader of *Degree Zero of Sound and Image: Creation before the Act*, a three-year International Project funded by the Dutch Research Council (NWO).

Taina M. Holopainen

did her ThD at the University of Helsinki and is currently a researcher at the same university. She is specialized in medieval moral philosophy, and is now working on a study on the will and deontological ethics from the 12th to the 14th century (from Anselm and Abelard to Scotus and Ockham). Taina Holopainen published several articles on medieval philosophy and theology, including a monograph: *William Ockham's Theory of the Foundations of Ethics* (Luther Agricola Society, Helsinki, 1991).

Eileen F. Kearney

is Emeritus Professor at Saint Xavier University, Chicago Illinois. Her primary interest is in Peter Abelard as a biblical theologian, with a major study of Abelard and the Bible forthcoming. Kearney published several articles that focus on textual analyses of select Abelardian works: the *Expositio in Hexaemeron*, his treatise on monastic reform (sermon 33), Heloise's request for a *Rule of Life* (Letter 6), and the brief excursus on *lectio divina* found in the Rule itself (Letter 8).

Constant J. Mews

gained his BA and MA from the University of Auckland, New Zealand, and his DPhil from Oxford University. He is Professor within the School of Philosophical, Historical and International Studies, Monash University where he is also Director of the Centre for Studies in Religion and Theology. He has published widely on medieval thought, ethics, and religious culture, with particular reference to the writings of Abelard, Heloise, Hildegard of Bingen and their contemporaries, including *Abelard and Heloise* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005) and *The Lost Love Letters of Heloise and Abelard. Perceptions of Dialogue in Twelfth-Century France*, 2nd edn (Palgrave, 2008). Constant Mews' research interests range from the early middle ages to late medieval religious and intellectual culture, as well as the interface between various religious and ethical traditions.

Eileen C. Sweeney

is Professor of Philosophy at Boston College. She is the author of *Logic, Theology and Poetry in Boethius, Abelard, and Alan of Lille: Words in the Absence of Things* (Palgrave, 2006) and *Anselm of Canterbury and the Desire for the Word* (Catholic University of America Press, 2012), as well as many articles on Thomas Aquinas and on theological language, philosophy of language, metaphysics, and ethics in Medieval philosophy.

Ineke van 't Spijker

gained her PhD from Utrecht University (1992). She is Affiliated Lecturer at the History Faculty, University of Cambridge, where she is a Life Member of Clare Hall. Van 't Spijker has published on hagiography, biblical exegesis, and religious self-fashioning in the High Middle Ages. Ineke van 't Spijker is currently working on notions of interiority, and the boundaries between inner and outer, in Augustine and the High Middle Ages.

Wim Verbaal

is professor of Latin Language and Literature at Ghent University. His research fields are the literature of the twelfth century, writings and spirituality of and around Bernard of Clairvaux and Peter Abelard, Latin poetics after Antiquity. Verbaal is president of the Master Historical Linguistics and Literature, a member of FIDEM and CARMEN and of the scientific and editorial committees of *Corpus Christianorum*, *Sacris Erudiri* and Toronto Medieval Texts.

Julian Yolles

received a BA in Classics at the University of Amsterdam and a MA in Theology from Utrecht University. He is currently a PhD student in Medieval Latin at Harvard University and a William R. Tyler Fellow in Byzantine Studies at the Dumbarton Oaks Research Library in Washington, DC, where he is writing a dissertation titled “Reading and writing in the Latin East: Latin culture in the Crusader States (1099–1187).” Yolles has contributed to the forthcoming *Virgil Encyclopedia* edited by Richard Thomas and Jan Ziolkowski, as well as translating a number of Medieval Latin lives of Muhammad for the Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library.

Introduction

Babette S. Hellemans

Peter Abelard (1079–1142) is certainly one of the most diversely gifted people of the Middle Ages. That being so, one would expect the many-sided nature of his thought to have taken pride of place in Abelardian scholarship. Yet with a few exceptions, there is no evidence that the scope of his talent is regarded as a particularly important feature of his ideas. Even as, in recent decades, the impact of cultural theory has become more accepted in the traditional curriculum of the humanities, it can hardly be said that Abelard's multitalented personality or the variety of his thought has become a fundamental research question. True, the last forty years—ever since the appearance of the significant and interdisciplinary anthology of articles *Pierre Abélard—Pierre le Vénérable* (1975)—have witnessed a proliferation in Abelardian scholarship, with the appearance of an imposing number of editions, translations and companions on specific themes. But even if one takes a generous view of this development, studies of the *materia abelardiana* are mostly limited to the established areas of specialization: history, philosophy, literature and so on. It seems that from the beginning—from the days of Cousin, De Rémusat, Gilson, Waddell and Homer Haskins—Abelard was fitted into a context from which he was not to escape. Now that he had been turned into a rationalist freethinker *avant la lettre*, his work became the object of humanist and philosophical interest. In the same vein the Abelardian material was often merely regarded as a set of logical arrangements within dialectic, rather than as textual examples resulting from the application of a particular philosophical method to a particular religious worldview. In consequence, statements by Abelard could be stretched beyond his original intention. He gave rise to a 'rationalized version' of the Trinity, for example, or theories of moral indifference, views he would never have sanctioned. This approach could also raise problems that Abelard would have thought irrelevant to rhetoric and poetics, such as the question whether his works written for Heloise were emotionally authentic. More importantly, Abelardian doctrines, isolated from their supporting texts and therefore from an arrangement of genres, could be reordered in sequences which frequently converted premise into conclusion, or conclusion into premise, quite independent of their relevance to Abelardian principles and methods: "for doubting is method too."

In spite of the radical process of secularization in Western society during these same decades and its concomitant effect on the study of the Middle

Ages, the background question in almost all work on Peter Abelard remains the division between the language of the divine and the 'rationality' of logical language. Mostly, this modern division had its repercussions on the way in which Abelard's texts are categorized. On the one hand, history situates him in a creative period in philosophy, and, on the other, in one of the most exciting times in the history of theology. To scholars of medieval theology, who study the transformations in the field of exegesis, dogmas and mysticism, Abelard is a problematic figure. No other 'theologian'—to use an anachronistic term—in his time was as radical as Abelard in his use of argumentation in the study of the divine. Yet for all his radicalism and all his *sic et non*, Abelard challenged neither the authority of Scripture and the Fathers nor the content of divine revelation. Meanwhile his philosophical readers, interested in the transformations concerning the *logica vetus* and the way in which Abelard turned Aristotelian logic upside down, and for whom divinity (what we would today call 'theology') is an alien category, tend to praise Abelard's rationality but can barely find a way to place him within a Christian worldview. Since Abelard also draws lines between several realms of language in the *trivium* while never completely tying these lines together, he is too distant from the kind of constitutional orthodoxy of the likes of Bernard of Clairvaux and Peter the Venerable, and frankly too extreme and too idiosyncratic to be considered a canonical figure in the history of ideas. If we deny that the intellectual period in which Peter Abelard was supposedly most influential was primarily 'monastic', what measure of influence may we attribute to his writings? That depends, I think, on how we conceive of his work. But if we continue to regard his work as adumbrating the foundations of a given productive discipline such as scholasticism—involving a given philosophical method which may be used to develop that method further and make it commensurate with the continuous development of intellectual history—then it can hardly be denied that he tends to be put into that unsatisfactory leftover category of thinkers who were simply 'out of sync' with their own time.

Besides this problem of anachronistic mental categories, Abelardian scholarship suffers from the ongoing debate concerning 'Abelard and Heloise', with its concomitant *partis pris* of authorship, historical truths, criteria for scholarship and even political or feminist statements. Indeed, there is another way Abelard tends to get trapped in history. Literary historians and historians of ideas continue to interpret Abelard as the first *homo romanticus* due to his relationship with Heloise. The scholarly effects of this romance as supposedly written down in the so-called love letters are multiple. What is at issue here is the state of our participation in this affair, a participation that shows the

Abelardian corpus in competition with the realms of philosophical or theological scholarship.

It is this aspect of rhetorical, philosophical and religious variety that I want to emphasize and that underlies many of the research questions in this volume. It may thus be both an advantage and a challenge that certain texts of Abelard can be placed in different realms simultaneously, even texts that may not present themselves as such. Not that, for instance, his *Theologia 'Summi Boni'* does not represent a systematic arrangement of theological questions, or that the *Dialectica* does not represent logical reasoning. However, when these works are also read as *responsive* texts in a world, and to a world, they will prove not to be indifferent to other realms of articulation. With his acute sensitivity to the multiplicity of human articulations and actions, Abelard points again and again to the cognitive resonances provoked by the polyphonic nature of language. This is why he uses, for instance, strategies of ordinary language for divine matters to show that linguistic ambiguity is common place to humanity itself.

So far a full acknowledgement of a multidimensionality (and perhaps even a tint of frailty) in Abelard's oeuvre has been lacking. Without aiming at a definitive answer, one of the main challenges of this volume is to overcome any simplistic categorization. That appreciation of the many dimensions is still to be realized, and can be realized only when critics and theorists manage to disembarass themselves of what might be called—in keeping with Peter von Moos' dictum—a certain hermeneutical naïveté. This naïveté will disappear only when we abandon the supposition that lies at its root: the assumption that a single philosophical or critical system can embody all possible truths and must be adopted to the exclusion of all other interpretive categories. In line with this approach, there was an obvious need to chart, provisionally, the variety of scholarship by inviting scholars from very different disciplinary backgrounds to talk and exchange ideas about Abelard's pluriformal use of language as a scholarly problem *in itself*.

Many new perspectives emerge in this volume, covering a wide range of disciplines as diverse as literature, philosophy, history, theology, music, poetry and philology. Subsequently, the authors also discuss more or less explicitly the different historiographical questions at issue. It was the avowed intent to collect a state-of-the-art survey of Abelardian scholarship. This implies that both eminent scholars in the field and young scholars were invited to write and think about the multiple uses of language in Abelard's work, thus leveling the mental horizon of intellectual history to the perspective of a global world in which a thorough knowledge of Christian and biblical culture is no

longer taken for granted. Attention has been paid to the geographical spread of the scholars, since the fragmentation from which Abelardian scholarship suffers can be partly explained by divisions in academic traditions often operating in self-contained networks. While traditional scholarly languages such as French or German remain crucial to the field of medieval studies, the articles are written in English for the sake of accessibility and all Latin has been translated. Working from such a global perspective, the contributors have taken into account the detailed research of recent decades and attempted to put the newly accessible work in context. Probably this volume represents at best a vision of the distant future, with closing perspectives and new opportunities, and from this viewpoint it is fortunate that the full range of contributions includes the most originally minded medieval scholars. They add a dimension desperately needed in the current 'publish or perish' mentality of academia: for the sake of a scholarly sustainability in the heritage of medieval intellectual culture we need their calm pace in order to feel something of that old-time scholarly pulse.



The volume is divided up into four sections, all of them dealing with the effort of putting Abelard back into his time, while at the same time pointing to his distinctive features. The first section *Abelard in Context* incorporates four contributions in which scholars try to connect Peter Abelard's use of language and thought to a broader historical and scholarly setting. Constant Mews places Abelard's scholarly career against the intellectual context of schools, and especially the influence of the school at Laon. Mews adumbrates the discussion on Abelard and Heloise in relation to the methods of teaching current in and around the wider region of Paris. He also shows how certain speculations on love and *caritas*, far from being confined to worldly knowledge, left their mark on love's meaning as disputed not only between Abelard and Heloise, but in a broader intellectual setting, including Anselm of Loan, William of Champeaux, Walter of Mortagne and others.

Next Eileen Sweeney discusses the polemic context in which Abelard developed his views on Jews, and discusses the relation between the Old and the New Testament. Within the precise alignment of different texts (*Collationes*, *Theologia christiana* and 'Summi Boni', *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*), Sweeney shows how Abelard contradicts himself. On the one hand, he states that the triune nature of God is clearly laid out in Hebrew scripture, thus including Jews amongst those with natural knowledge of the Trinity. On the other hand, however, Abelard moves directly from this observation to

invective against the Jews, excoriating them for failing to recognize the truth so clearly laid out for them. Sweeney proves that Abelard's reflections on the Jews are reflections of his own thought that also have a role to play in the shifting ground of Christian anti-Jewish polemic in the twelfth century.

While in the first two articles we find Abelard firmly placed in the polemics of his own time, Julian Yolles, in his article on *Divine Omnipotence and the Liberal Arts in Peter Damian and Peter Abelard*, demonstrates how, taking into account the rhetorical heritage, we can appreciate the complexity of Abelard's linguistic skills. With the help of Peter Damian, Yolles weaves Abelard's discussions of dialectic, patristic authority, and rhetoric together, by comparing the arguments of both authors on the question of what it means for God to be omnipotent. The article especially focuses on the third book of Abelard's *Theologia 'Scholarium.'*

Moving on to the explorations of the major theologians of the twelfth century, the last article of this section concentrates on Peter Abelard and Hugh of Saint Victor. Zooming in on the scholarly exchange, up to the point of correspondence and conflict in the inner and outer, Ineke van 't Spijker shows the differences between the two authors, in order to understand better the meaning of 'inwardness.' While for Hugh inner and outer function within a worldview where 'correspondence' is dominant, Van 't Spijker discusses the complexity of Abelard's vision of inwardness as less self-evident, as he seems to point to the underlying tension intrinsically connected to 'a moral life.'

After the discussion of intellectual exchange put in a broader historical context, the next section *Controversy and Exchange* focuses on the tensions that lie at the heart of Abelard's texts. Along the way the papers in this section raise questions that are in a way representative of Abelard's consistency with his own arguments, the *argument qua argument*, ranging from the hostility towards his thought, his theology, logic and rhetoric—tools needed for putting arguments together—to the impenetrability of 'veiled' Truth. With forensic precision, Michael Clanchy takes up an aspect mentioned by Bernard of Clairvaux. In justifying his accusations at the council of Sens (1141) Bernard pointed out that Abelard's heresies were "to be found partly in a book of sentences of Master Peter." The question presents itself whether Abelard was right in remonstrating against Bernard that he was not the author of the book. Clanchy examines the issue further by asking whether, at the time of the council, the liberal arts 'policy' was thwarting Abelard. Clanchy suggests that the prejudice of Abelard's opponents, somehow afraid that logic would prevail over divinity, made them claim his authorship of the book.

In many respects, Lesley-Anne Dyer, in her *Veiled Platonic Triads in Abelard's Theologia 'Summi Boni'*, stays close to the problem of 'theology' as well as its

molding by the 'liberal arts policy' discussed by Clanchy and Yolles. Not only does Dyer's article discuss why Abelard was accused this time by Bernard of equating the Holy Spirit with the World Soul, but she also demonstrates how Abelard defends the appropriateness of Platonic visions to Christianity by the technical use of rhetorical figures. Furthermore, Dyer argues that Abelard's theological appropriation of the World Soul should be seen within the larger context of two Platonic triads that were widely used in the medieval tradition.

In a volume in which the notion of language is so prominent, the presence of hymns and literary creation seems appropriate. Moving to the third section of articles—*Shaping Life*—we keep our eyes focused on the absorption of theological and dogmatic models as Abelard shaped these models into a language of his own. When he developed a monastic rule and hymns for the Paraclete, Abelard showed a particular interest in biographical themes appropriate for a female monastery. In his article on the *Rhetoric of Virgins and Widows*, William Flynn shows that Abelard's turn to rhetoric enabled him to situate the daily running of a monastery, philosophical interests shifting from logical to ethical topics, from the theory of language to the theory of moral action. Flynn's close reading of a selection of the hymns (and they are provided at the end of the article so that the reader can follow Flynn's argument alongside the sources) shows the tensions between these different fields. Flynn demonstrates how these tensions encouraged the listeners at the Paraclete to a heightened awareness to examples and images, while the use of *topoi* in poetry and preaching were at the same time the principal means of creating a new type of reformed monasticism.

The notion of self-representation discussed by Wim Verbaal in his article *Trapping the Future: Abelard's Multi-layered Image-building* reminds one of the complexity of rhetorical play in Flynn's article. 'Image building' is often used to refer to an intentional self-representation in an author's text in which the writer looks back on events in a way that makes him as favorable as possible in the present. However, Verbaal asks whether this self-building in Abelard's *Historia calamitatum* may also express more fundamental dimensions of rhetorical play and the dubitability of 'the self' in this 'biography'. Verbaal furthermore questions whether, with the blessing of hindsight, the epistolary exchange does not reflect what we already know, namely the assumption that the pathos in these letters blemishes the iconic status of both Abelard and Heloise. We are, so to speak, 'trapped' in the morality of a historical self-building.

While the essays of Flynn and Verbaal focused on the literary shape of life, Taiva Holopainen's *Intentions and Conscious Moral Choices in Peter Abelard's Know Yourself* addresses the problem of shaping the self with regard to

Abelard's handling of the status of moral decisions and the will. Holopainen reminds us of the fact that only the first book of the *Ethica* or *Know Thyself* has come down to us in full, and that we have only the very beginning of the second. The work was never finished because of Abelard's death. The material available to us, therefore, mostly deals with morally *bad* acts. Our inaccessibility to the 'missing part' should not, however, tempt us into judging the work only as an account of morally bad acts. Rather than the search for a multi-layered and shifting literary universe, Holopainen presents a case for stability: how to account for a sustainability of the will (*voluntas*) grounded in emotional disposition, while taking into account *both* morally good and morally bad acts? Ethical issues are discussed in the article through key concepts such as 'sin' (*peccatum*), 'consent' (*consensus*), and 'intention' (*intentio*). By focusing on some important aspects in Abelard's use of them, Holopainen argues that it is possible to gain a deeper understanding of the multi-layered themes Abelard ultimately presents.

The last article of this section discusses the reverse side of what it means to give shape to life. Quoting Abelard *He who kills himself liberates a wretch*, Juanita Feros Ruys discusses Abelard's view on suicide. In its gravity, suicide is a non-form of life, unspeakable, transcending human history. With those ideas in mind, Feros Ruys presents a case in the negative. The article particularly discusses Abelard's *Carmen ad Astralabium*, his *Historia calamitatum*, and his *Planctus*. Through an appropriation of the medieval topical forms of life of penitence, solitude and silence, Abelard's notion of sin and penitence shows that suicide was not necessarily a concept that was unthinkable. It was one that remained largely unspoken and sometimes—even for Abelard as one of the most articulate of writers—ultimately unspeakable.

The remaining section of the volume discusses the theme of *Poetics and Poetry*, though not because in this section the sense of shaping life is absent. The fluidity or firmness of language, present throughout the book, provides for the simultaneous presence of all aspects involved. There is, for instance, the 'accident' or 'poetic act,' which embraces the possibility of fading away while at the same time leaving behind a sacramental memory of sorts. Interest in 'poetics' thus gradually shifts from a concern with doctrinal disputation or synthesis to something Aristotle points towards in his own *Poetics* (not known to Abelard), namely as indispensable preliminary to a concern of what might be called a philosophical inquiry. Abelard's interests in poetics seem to have followed the analogy of historical interests in the authorities and the Bible and to have been concerned with the subject of inquiry itself, rather than with the factuality of events.

In discussing Abelard's *Planctus 'Dolorum solatium'* as *A New Song for David*, Eileen Kearney considers the poetic freedom of the biblical record of what was a singular and personal experience for Dinah, or Jacob, or David. Those 'singulars' become universal as their sorrows embody the experience of all who grieve and mourn. Pointing to the gap that exists in time between the ancient and the present, between a voice in a distant past and the new voice of the present, Kearney shows how Abelard bridges these temporal dimensions in the text, encapsulating the desolation of that long ago loss (the entire Latin text with a translation is provided at the end of this article). As poet, then, Abelard creates and maintains a certain detachment between himself and the subject of the *Planctus* while at the same time the question of parallels between what is articulated in Abelard's poems and his personal life is often raised and, certainly, similarities between the two can be observed.

Moving to the beginnings of speech, Peter Cramer discusses Abelard's musings on time, history, and language in the *Expositio in Hexaemeron*. This text is strongly linked to the hymns of the Paraclete we already explored in Flynn's article. Both the *Expositio* and the *Hymnarius Paraclitensis* belong, in a broader sense, to the corpus of texts Abelard wrote for Heloise. In Cramer's article *Abelard on the First Six Days*, Abelard stresses the problems that confront the reader of Genesis' report of the coming into being of the first six days. Cramer examines how Abelard elaborates on the moment before speech was spoken out of eternity into the realm of time and its subsequent course. Cramer brings to the surface some important implications underlying Abelardian poetics: the complex interrelation of arts—literary fiction and history—without compromise or adulteration of its proper purposes and criteria. Finally, the opposition of art to nature envisages an art which is natural in that it proceeds from natural powers: the act of creating and the acknowledgement that nothing in it is waste.

Finally, and in closing, Babette Hellemans' contribution *Abelard and the Poetics of Ingenium* links up to the poetical conception proposed in Cramer's article concerning rhetoric, poetics and art, together with the mechanics of Abelard's hermeneutics. Doing so, she sheds light on some of the confusions to which these mechanics have given rise. By taking the notion of *ingenium* (put forward by Abelard himself in the *Historia calamitatum*) as an epistemological category, Hellemans coins a critical and philosophical method, established on the basis of an Abelardian critical pluralism. Her radical investigation of the bases of 'knowledge' in Abelard's Christian worldview, with its various principles and methods, opens up new avenues in the inquiry as to how these bases are situated in relation to each other. As a result, taking fixed dogmatic, skeptical or eclectic positions is proven to be unnecessary.

PART ONE

Abelard in Context



Abelard, Heloise, and Discussion of Love in the Twelfth-Century Schools

Constant J. Mews

One consequence of Peter Abelard's account in the *Historia calamitatum* of his early relationship with Heloise is that he is more often associated with love as sexual passion (*amor*) than with love as either *caritas*, the spiritual ideal to which all Christians are called, or *dilectio*, selfless love for a friend. Yet Abelard was fully aware of the complexities of discussion about the relationship between *caritas*, *dilectio* and *amor* taking place within both the schools and monastic cloisters during the twelfth century.¹ This was a period of great interest in the need to strike a balance between Christian love and classical ideals of friendship, not always easy within an ascetic milieu.² One of the earliest treatises on the subject was the *De natura et dignitate amoris*, composed by William of Saint-Thierry (d. 1148), not long after 1118, when he became abbot of that monastery, just outside the city of Reims. He sought to counter what he saw as the pernicious influence of Ovid among the young by reflecting on the divine character of *amor*, which he saw as evolving in the human person into *caritas* and wisdom.³ William's ideas would have a great impact on Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153), who devoted much of his life to writing about the complex connections between human and divine love. Their thoughts would in turn influence Hugh of Saint-Victor (d. 1141) and other Augustinian canons, notably Richard of Saint-Victor (d. 1173), author of the *De quatuor gradibus violentae caritatis* (On the Four Degrees of Violent Love).⁴ Yet these monks

1 A significant exception is the study of C. Stephen Jaeger, *Ennobling Love: In Search of a Lost Sensibility* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999).

2 See, for example, Brian P. McGuire, *Friendship and Community: The Monastic Experience, 350–1250* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1988); Wim Verbaal, "L'amitié et les lettres: Le douzième siècle et le cas de Bernard de Clairvaux," in *La société des amis à Rome et dans la littérature médiévale et humaniste*, ed. P. Galland-Hallyn, et al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 351–381; Constant J. Mews and Neville Chiavaroli, "The Latin West," in *Friendship: A History*, ed. Barbara Caine (London: Equinox, 2009), 73–102.

3 Guilelmus de Sancto Theodorico, *De natura et dignitate amoris*, in *Guillaume de Saint-Thierry: Deux traités de l'amour de Dieu*, ed. Marie-Madeleine Davy (Paris: Vrin, 1953), 70–137.

4 The significance of Victorine thinking on the subject is underlined by an important anthology of translated texts: see Hugh Feiss, ed., trans., and intro, *On Love: A Selection of Works of Hugh, Adam, Achard, Richard and Godfrey of St Victor* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011).

and canons were responding to a broader debate in society about how human love, celebrated in different ways by both Cicero and Ovid, related to Christian teaching. It was a discussion that involved women as much as men, although their voices were less often heard in the cloister or the schoolroom.

In the light of such debate, it was perhaps inevitable that Abelard's effort to apply his thinking about love to understanding how Christ redeemed humanity from the redemption—developed most fully in the mid 1130s in his commentary on St Paul's Epistle to the Romans, would be controversial. John Marenbon interprets Abelard's theology as reflecting an ethical concern, distinct from his interest in dialectic, acknowledging the potential influence of Heloise on his thinking.⁵ Matthias Perkams similarly considers love as a central idea both in Abelard's theology of redemption, as formulated in his commentary on Romans and in his ethics, again mentioning Heloise's influence in passing.⁶

Yet the extent of Heloise's influence in shaping Abelard's thought is still a controversial question. Doubts about whether she wrote the famous letters attributed to her in response to the *Historia calamitatum* have now largely disappeared. Yet the *Epistolae duorum amantium*, letters and poems exchanged between a famous teacher and his gifted female student, continue to provoke controversy. As I have argued elsewhere, Könsgen's brief analysis of these letters as written in the first half of the twelfth century by a couple 'like Abelard and Heloise' can be extended considerably.⁷ Suggestions have also been made

5 John Marenbon, *The Philosophy of Peter Abelard* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 300.

6 Matthias Perkams, *Liebe als Zentralbegriff der Ethik nach Peter Abaelard*, BGPM, Neue Folge, Band 58 (Münster: Aschendorff, 2001), esp. 296–299.

7 These love letters, Peter Abelard, *Epistolae* [*Ep.*], are critically edited in Ewald Könsgen, ed., *Epistolae duorum amantium: Briefe Abaelards und Heloises?* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), and are attributed to Abelard and Heloise by certain scholars: see Jaeger, *Ennobling Love*, 157–173; Mews, *The Lost Letters of Heloise and Abelard: Perceptions of Dialogue in Twelfth-Century France*, 2nd ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), with an additional chapter reviewing debate since the original 1999 edition; the introduction of Sylvain Piron, trans., *Lettres des deux amants attribuées à Héloïse et Abélard* (Paris: Gallimard, 2005); and in Sylvain Piron, "Heloise's Literary Self-fashioning and the *Epistolae duorum amantium*," in *Strategies of Remembrance: From Pindar to Hölderlin*, ed. Lucie Doležalová (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2009), 102–162. John Marenbon questions their attribution, without formulating a hypothesis on their authorship: see Marenbon, "Lost Love Letters? A Controversy in Retrospect," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 4 (2008), 267–280. For further arguments, based on textual relationships between the *Epistolae* and *Sic et non*, of which I was unaware in 1999, see Constant J. Mews, "Cicero and the Boundaries of Friendship in the Twelfth Century," *Viator* 38, no. 2 (2007), 369–384 and Constant J. Mews, "Discussing Love: The *Epistolae duorum amantium* and Abelard's *Sic et non*," *Journal of Medieval Latin* 19 (2009), 130–147.

these love letters are ‘below their intellectual level,’ and that they could have been written by a single author, influenced by monastic reflection on love, or by a couple who happen to employ similar vocabulary to that of Abelard and Heloise.⁸ Yet lexical arguments based on small differences in the relative frequency of certain words (like *ergo*) between the *Epistolae* and Abelard’s known writing do not take into account the way the love letters belong to a literary genre quite distinct from letters of spiritual counsel, such as exemplified by the *Historia calamitatum*.⁹ The most helpful part of the *Epistolae* are those sections where the teacher in the exchange discusses with his student the nature of love, as these can be compared with other discussions in the twelfth century, both by Abelard and his contemporaries.

Caritas in the Theologia ‘Scholarium’ and the Sententie of Abelard

Abelard does not devote particular attention to *caritas* in either his initial discussion of the Trinity (the *Theologia ‘Summi Boni’*, ca. 1119–20) or in its major revision, the *Theologia christiana*, expanded in the 1120s, except in the sense of divine love.¹⁰ Only in the 1130s, at the outset of the first book of the *Theologia ‘Scholarium’*, does he declare that *caritas*, along with faith and sacraments,

8 Peter Godman, *Paradoxes of Conscience in the High Middle Ages: Abelard, Heloise, and the Archpoet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), xi, observes that just as the hypothesis that a single author wrote the famous letters of Abelard and Heloise is untenable, “So too, by implication, is the attempt to foist on the famous couple works that are below their intellectual level, known by the title *Epistolae duorum amantium* given them by their first and best editor, Ewald Könsgen.” (As Könsgen makes clear, the title is actually that of their copyist ca. 1471, Johannes de Vepria.) Godman does not specify whether he thinks the *Epistolae* are by a single author, but refers to Peter von Moos, “Die *Epistolae duorum amantium* und die säkulare Religion der Liebe. Methodenkritische Vorüberlegungen zu einem einmaligen Werk mittellateinischer Briefliteratur,” *Studi Medievali* 3a ser. 44 (2003), 1–115. Von Moos argues that a single author composed both male and female letters in the *Epistolae* under the influence of Aelred of Rievaulx, without considering the lack of thematic unity in these letters or their great difference from letters of monastic friendship.

9 Jan M. Ziolkowski argues from differences in word frequency between the *Epistolae* and known writings of Abelard and Heloise (none in the genre of love letters) that they cannot be authentic, considering any textual parallels are purely coincidental. See Jan M. Ziolkowski, “Lost and Not Yet Found: Heloise, Abelard, and the *Epistolae duorum amantium*,” *Journal of Medieval Latin* 14 (2004), 171–202.

10 Peter Abelard, *Theologia ‘Summi Boni’* [TSB], 1.17, in Eligius-Marie Buytaert and Constant J. Mews, ed., *Theologia ‘Summi Boni’*, CCCM 13 (1987), 309–549, here 92.

constitute the *summa* of human salvation, offering definitions of each of these terms. Abelard took over unchanged the definitions of faith and sacraments that he had formulated in a draft, perhaps from the early 1130s, of this opening section. He defines faith, not as the substance of things hoped for (Hebrews 11.1), but as the estimation (*existimatio*) of things not apparent to the physical senses.¹¹ Rather than invoking Augustine's definition of sacrament as 'the sign of a sacred thing' (the phrase preferred by Hugh of Saint Victor), he prefers another definition, also inspired by Augustine, but popularised by Berengar, of its being 'an outward sign of invisible grace.'¹² By contrast Abelard extends his definition of *caritas* in the complete version of the *Theologia 'Scholarium'* with a quite new awareness of the importance of true intention in love, not present in the original version of the draft prologue. He does so by introducing Cicero's definition of friendship as good will to another for that person's sake:

Honorable love is directed to that end which it ought, just as by contrast cupidity is called dishonorable and foul love. *Amor* is good will to another, for that person's sake. Love indeed is a good will to another because of that person, by which we choose that he live in that way in which we believe it is good for him to live, and we wish this more for his sake than our own.¹³

Whereas in the draft version the only authority Abelard had quoted in relation to *caritas* was St Paul's injunction (I Cor. 10:31) that we should do everything for the sake of God, he now includes a lengthy discussion of how not all love is equally pure, for example when prayers for another person are in fact directed to satisfying one's own will—an early version of his theory of intention. He

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- 11 Peter Abelard, *Theologia 'Scholarium'* [*TSch*], 1.1, available in Eligius-Marie Buytaert and Constant J. Mews, ed., *Theologia 'scholarium,'* CCCM 13 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1987), 318: 'Tria sunt, ut arbitror, in quibus humanae salutis summa consistit, fides uidelicet, caritas et sacramenta.' See also the early draft of *TSch*, in Eligius-Marie Buytaert, ed., *Opera theologica II. Theologia christiana. Theologia scholarium (recensiones breviores). Capitula haeresum Petri Abaelardi*, by Petrus Abaelardus, CCCM 12 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1969a), 404.
- 12 *TSch*, 1.9, 321; *TSch*, 1.6, 406; with references to Berengar's adaptation of the phrase. Hugh of St Victor defines sacrament only as "*sacrae rei signum*." See Hugh of St Victor, *De sacramentis Christianae fidei*, ed. Rainer Berndt (Münster: Aschendorff, 2008), 1.9, 209, PL 176:317B.
- 13 *TSch*, 1.2, 319: 'Caritas uero est amor honestus, qui ad eum uidelicet finem dirigitur ad quem oportet, sicut econtrario cupiditas amor inhonestus ac turpis appellatur. Amor uero est bona erga alterum propter ipsum uoluntas, qua uidelicet optamus ut eo modo se habeat quo se habere bonum ei esse credimus.' Only the first sentence is found in the early draft of this section: *TSch*, 1.3, ed. Buytaert (1969a), 405.

would refine these ideas further in his *Scito te ipsum* (late 1130s), when he moves away from his earlier view that sin was *mala voluntas*, by explaining that such a will was only sinful if there was deliberate consented to a bad will, in contempt of God.¹⁴

The definitions of faith, sacrament and charity as found in the draft version of the prologue to the *Theologia 'Scholarium'* recur in every recension of the *Sententie magistri Petri Abaelardi*, a record taken down by a student from oral teaching, perhaps supplemented by that draft.¹⁵ Unlike the *Theologia*, just concerned with faith in God, these *sententie* are organised into sections on faith, sacraments and charity. Its third section begins with a discussion of *caritas* that mentions love as 'good will' to another in passing, without explicitly acknowledging its Ciceronian inspiration.¹⁶ Very similar comments are made in the *Sententie Parisienses*, an independent record of Abelard's teaching, that sometimes records more vivid examples. Here, for example, the difference between *caritas* and *cupiditas* is explained as that between legitimate love for one's wife and improper passion for a prostitute. It makes no reference to the Ciceronian definition of friendship or to subtleties about pure intention.¹⁷ Its discussion of ordered love in the third section, rephrasing part of the *Sententie*, is similarly idiosyncratic: "Since we ought to keep this order in love, [it results] that I ought to love some religious man more than my father who is not as religious, yet in the demonstration of *caritas* it is different, because if I cannot suffice [to have love] for both, I should rather take love away from the former and give it to my father, because the latter belongs to me, the former not." The

14 This tradition is rightly observed in the notes of David E. Luscombe, ed., trans. and notes, *Peter Abelard's Ethics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 16–17, which contains Peter Abelard, *Scito te ipsum* [Sc.]. For a more recent edition of the passage in which he questions the previous view that sin was *mala voluntas*, see Sc., available in Rainer Ilgner, ed., *Scito te ipsum*, CCCM 190 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), 10.

15 Peter Abelard, *Sententie magistri Petri Abaelardi* [*Sent. magistri Petri*], 2–6, available in David E. Luscombe, et al., ed., *Sententie magistri Petri Abaelardi*, CCCM 14 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 5–6. While this work had previously been known as the *Sententie Hermanni*, because the name Hermannus is used instead of Petrus within one of the three recensions, the manuscripts consistently refer to the work as the *Sententie* of Abelard; see Constant J. Mews, "The *Sententie* of Peter Abelard," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 53 (1986), 130–184, reprinted in Constant J. Mews, *Abelard and His Legacy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001).

16 *Sent. magistri Petri*, 243–244, ed. Luscombe, et al. (2006), 127–128.

17 Peter Abelard, *Sententie Parisienses* [*Sent. Par.*], available in Artur Michael Landgraf, ed., *Ecrits théologiques de l'école d'Abélard* (Louvain: Université catholique, 1934), here 5: 'Honestus ideo dico, quia est turpus amor, ut est ille qui cum meretrice habetur. Est honestus, qui cum uxore propria habetur.'

only authority cited is Augustine's definition, recalled inaccurately, that *caritas* is a movement of the spirit to love God for his own sake and one's neighbour because of God (omitting the words *ad fruendum*, central to Augustine's argument that it was a move to enjoy God).¹⁸ The *Sent. Parisienses* concludes by asserting that someone can have *caritas* within him, even when he sinned—citing the example of David 'who had Christ as a foundation in his heart,' while sinning in practice, as justification for showing how a righteous person could fall, but would be better when he rose again, as—for the saints—all things cooperate for the good.¹⁹ It here repeats what the *Sententie* of Abelard maintains, that although David might have had Christ in his heart, he was wrong to have sex with Bathsheba, while pretending to show friendship for Uriah.²⁰ Was this a way for Abelard to indicate that he might have had *caritas* for Heloise, but had clearly sinned in indulging his passion for her?

Abelard and Anselm of Laon

Abelard was not the first schoolman to attempt a definition of love. Thanks to the comprehensive study of Cédric Giraud, we have a much clearer picture of how extensive was the reputation of Anselm of Laon (d. 1117) across Latin Europe in the early twelfth century—confirming the picture indirectly conveyed by Abelard.²¹ Anselm was celebrated both for glossing certain books of the Bible, in particular the Psalms, the Song of Songs, the Gospel of John and the Book of Revelation, and for delivering *sententie* on the major themes presented by the Bible.²² It is precisely because he was so widely esteemed that it is difficult to be certain about which glosses are his, and which *sententie* did

18 Ibid., 49.

19 Ibid., 50–51: 'Notandum, quod David in coitu non habebat dilectionem proximi, intelligendum est per exhibitionem [...]'

20 Ibid., 254, 133: 'Nota quod David cum concumbebat cum Bethsabée non habet dilectionem proximi in exhibitione. [...] Salua igitur auctoritate ista dicemus quod dilibet Vriam affectu sed non effectu. Hec uero auctoritas de dilectione in effectum intelligitur.'

21 Cédric Giraud, *Per verba magistri: Anselme de Laon et son école au XII^e siècle* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010).

22 For a summary of the complex literature on the school of Laon, see Artur Michael Landgraf, *Introduction à l'histoire de la littérature théologique de la scolastique naissante* (Montréal and Paris: Institut d'Etudes médiévales and Vrin, 1973), 67–78; see also Odon Lottin, ed., *Psychologie et morale aux XII^e et XIII^e siècles*, Problèmes d'histoire littéraire. L'école d'Anselme de Laon et de Guillaume de Champeaux 5 (Gembloux, Belgium: J. Duculot, 1959). The organisation of this teaching is discussed by H. Cloes, "La

indeed originate with him, because his name had acquired (at least by the mid twelfth century) an authoritative status that could give weight to any opinion. Anselm's great achievement was to make the complex legacy of the Fathers of the Church accessible for understanding both the text of Scripture and its core themes of creation, redemption, the Church and the life to come.

As Michael Clanchy and Lesley Smith have observed, Anselm's preferred mode of instruction was fundamentally oral.²³ The *Sententie* attributed to Anselm were collected alongside excerpts from the Fathers that he subjected to discussion, although these patristic texts were not included by Lottin in his edition of excerpts from the *Liber pancrisis*—put together from existing collections of the *Sententie* of both Anselm and William of Champeaux, perhaps not before the 1150s.²⁴ Exactly how far their internal organisation was due to Anselm or to his leading disciples is impossible to tell. An important sentence collection, known from its opening as *Principium et causa omnium deus*, is sometimes attributed in manuscripts to Anselm, but in one copy is assigned to his brother, Ralph (d. 1133), who continued the school at Laon after Anselm's death. In another manuscript it is introduced as *Sententie a magistro Wutolfo collecte*, perhaps referring to Lotulf of Novara, active with Alberic of Reims in having Abelard condemned at Soissons in 1121.²⁵ Even if we cannot be certain

systematization théologique pendant la première moitié du XII^e siècle," *Ephemerides theologicae Lovanienses* 34 (1958), 277–329.

- 23 Michael Clanchy and Lesley Smith, "Abelard's Description of the School of Laon: What Might it Tell Us About Early Scholastic Teaching?" *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 54 (2010), 1–34.
- 24 Constant J. Mews and Cédric Giraud, "Le liber pancrisis, un florilège des pères et des maîtres modernes du XII^e siècle," *Archivum latinitatis medii aevi* 64 (2006), 145–191.
- 25 The edition of F. Bliemetzrieder, *Anselm von Laon systematische Sentenzen*, BGPMA 18.2–3 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1919) was criticised by H. Weisweiler, *Das Schrifttum des Schule Anselms von Laon und Wilhelms von Champeaux in deutschen Bibliotheken*, BGPMA 33.1–2 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1936) for its attributing the work to Anselm, and for failing to recognise its dependence on various other treatises, such as *Deus non habet*. On the attribution to Uutolf in Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Clm 14730, see Weisweiler, *Das Schrifttum*, 23–24 and 252–253, and Cédric Giraud, "Le recueil des sentences de l'école de Laon *Principium et causa*: Un cas de pluri-attribution," in *Parva pro magnis numeris: Études de littérature tardo-antique et médiévale offertes à François Dolbeau par ses élèves*, ed. Monique Goullet (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 245–269, noting that copies survive attributed as well to Ralph (Cambridge, Gonville, and Caius College 151/201). Giraud, "Le recueil," 257 notes an independent reference to *Sententie a Lotulfo collecte in quo due ceteriones de divinitate* in Munich, Clm 19112, f. 177v. On the making of Hugh's *Sententie*, see Mews, "Orality, Literacy and Authority in the Twelfth-Century Schools," *Exemplaria* 2 (1990), 475–500.

as to whether Anselm inspired its teaching, it may have been composed in a similar way to the *Sententie de divinitate* (ca. 1127), taken down by Lawrence from the teaching of his master, Hugh of St Victor. Such sentence collections followed the structure of the Nicene Creed, beginning with teaching about God as Creator, moving through the history of salvation, ending with ethical and pastoral questions about human behaviour. While Lottin speculated that the *sententie* attributed to Anselm had been extracted from lost commentaries on scripture, it seems more likely that he engaged in both forms of teaching, namely glossing on the Bible, informed by patristic teaching, and resolution of questions relating to its major themes, namely God, redemption as well as questions raised by pastoral issues in the Church. Among the many issues debated in *Principium et causa omnium*, there is a significant discussion of the character of *caritas*, debating the question whether anyone can perish with love as the foundation for his action. The question is raised without a clear answer formulated.²⁶

Anselm's authority was such that ideas were frequently attributed to him that may in fact be the work of a subsequent generation. Thus a widely copied letter of Anselm to an abbot H. of Liège (possibly Heribrand, although this has been contested) in response to accusations by Rupert of Deutz that he was teaching that God willed evil, summarises his theological method.²⁷ Anselm asserts that while patristic opinions might seem different, they were always coherent with each other in their fundamental message. Any disagreements generating contention among the arrogant were purely verbal.²⁸ While God worked in the souls of men shaping their will, whether to good or evil, this did not mean that God willed evil. The expressions of scripture needed to be considered carefully to gauge their true meaning.

The printed version of this letter contains a further extension relating to *caritas* perhaps formulated by a disciple of Anselm. One who truly worshipped God rejected self-seeking greed, and wished only that *caritas*, 'which is God' increase both in himself and his neighbour.²⁹ This leads to a considered reflec-

26 *Principium et causa omnium*, 82.

27 *Epistola ad. H. abbatem S. Laurentii Leodiensis*, in: Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, 175–177; see H. Silvestre, "A propos de la lettre d'Anselme de Laon a Heribrand de Saint-Laurent," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 28 (1961), 5–25. The version printed in PL 162, 1587–1588A, contains a long additional passage (1588A–1592B), not found in manuscripts. See the expanded list of MSS of the original version given by Giraud, *Per verba magistri*, 165–166.

28 Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, 176 (PL 162, 1587B): 'Sententie quidem omnium catholicorum diverse, sed non adverse, in unam concurrunt conuenientiam.'

29 PL 162, 1588AB: 'Avaritia proprie vocatur, *idolorum servitus*; avarus enim pecuniae tribuit quod Deo debetur et convenit, quod fit tribus modis: desiderat quippe avarus ut pecuniam

tion on *amor Dei* as of two kinds, one manifest by works of mercy, like visiting the sick, the other demonstrated through the spiritual discipline of those within the cloister. *Caritas* is presented in majestic terms as a four-sided city, in which as love of God, self, friend and enemy alike, governing four cardinal virtues: humility, prudence, fortitude and temperance.³⁰ This extension to Anselm's letter provides a Ciceronian list of four cardinal virtues in which *iustitia* is replaced by *humilitas*. In a crude way, the extended letter tries to show how classical virtues could be combined with Augustine's teaching, based on St Paul, about the primacy of love.

Abelard and William of Champeaux

Although Lottin classified William of Champeaux as part of 'the school of Anselm of Laon', there is no evidence that William ever glossed scripture in the manner of his teacher. The sentences attributed to him in the *Liber pancrisis* show that while sharing Anselm's Augustinian views of original sin, he was more interested than his teacher in analysing the meaning of words (*voces*) applied to God.³¹ This interest of William in speculative questions suggests the possible influence of the *Glosule* on Priscan and the writings of St Anselm (1033–1109), who—like William—was more interested in theological questions, whether about God, the incarnation, free will and predestination, than in glossing scripture.

Because William's sentences are combined with those of Anselm of Laon in the *Liber pancrisis*, along with some additional material from Ivo of Chartres and Ralph of Laon (probably not before the 1150s) his theology is too often

habeat, et ut habitam augeat, et ne amittat. Sic cultor Dei desiderat ut charitatem, quae Deus est, habeat, et tam in se quam in proximis augeat, et ne eam amittat.'

30 PL 162:1590: 'Charitas etiam civitas est in quadro posita; diligit enim Deum, diligit se, diligit amicum, diligit inimicum. Habet etiam quatuor primas virtutes sibi adjunctas, et cohaerentes, quae sunt quadrum civitatis, humilitas, prudentia, fortitudo, temperantia. Humilitas fecunda mater est virtutum et nutrix.'

31 Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, no. 236, 19; see also nos. 282, 290–292, 230–231, 234–239; on William's awareness of the thought of St Anselm (as distinct from Anselm of Laon) see Constant J. Mews, 'St Anselm and the Development of Philosophical Theology in Twelfth-Century Paris,' in *Anselm and Abelard: Investigations and Juxtapositions*, ed. Giles E. M. Gasper and Helmut Kohlenberger (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2006), 196–222. On the *Glosule* and its definition of a noun, see Anne Grondeux and Irène Rosier-Catach, 'Les Glosulae super Priscianum et leur tradition,' in *Arts du langage et théologie aux confins des XI^e et XII^e siècle*, ed. I. Rosier-Catach (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 107–179.

assimilated with that of his teacher. Yet William differed from Anselm in teaching both secular and sacred subjects, establishing a model that Abelard would emulate. The polemic of the *Historia calamitatum* against the hypocrisy of William's decision to continue to teach at a public school, even after adopting a stricter way of life, disguises the extent to which he was indebted to his teacher.³²

We have a particularly vivid account of the excitement generated by this way of teaching in a letter from a German student, telling us that William, having left the cathedral only in Easter of that year, taught both secular and divine learning, without charging money at the public school he had established at a disused monastery—certainly Saint Victor in Paris.³³ The position of the letter within the *Codex Udalrici* combines with other evidence to suggest that William resigned his position at Notre-Dame only in Easter 1111, not in 1108 (as remembered at Saint Victor, where seventeenth-century antiquaries fondly imagined that the abbey had been founded at the same time as Louis VI ascended the throne).³⁴ When Abelard challenged William's definition of a universal in the course of lectures on rhetoric, William was then lecturing on both secular and sacred disciplines.³⁵ Yet while William was clearly more expert than Anselm in the arts of language, he inherited Anselm's Augustinian views about the corruption of the human will through original sin, and the importance of grace in achieving redemption. There is no evidence he went significantly beyond Anselm of Laon in thinking about ethical issues. In 1113, William left Saint Victor to become bishop of Châlons, two years later befriending and ordaining Bernard as abbot of Clairvaux. It seems that William's interests became increasingly ascetic rather than to do with the arts of language.³⁶

William's departure from the schools in 1113, coupled with Anselm's death in June 1117, created intense competition as to who would inherit the privileged position occupied by Anselm at Laon. Alberic of Reims and Lotulf of Novara, sought to use the opportunity to assert themselves at Reims as Anselm's true heirs. According to a poem by Hugh Primas, Alberic had a distinguished group

32 Peter Abelard, *Historia calamitatum* [HC], ed. in Monfrin 1974, 62–109; 65.

33 *Udalrici Codex*, in *Monumenta Bambergensia*, ed. Phillipe Jaffé, *Bibliotheca rerum germanicarum* 5 (Berlin: 1869), no. 160, 286.

34 I argue for 1111 (not 1108) as the year of the foundation of Saint Victor and thus of his disputation with William, in Mews, "The Foundation of St Victor (Easter 1111) and the Chronology of Abelard's Early Career," in *Arts du langage et théologie aux confins des XI^e et XII^e siècles*, 83–104.

35 HC, 65, 82.

36 On this period, see Mews, "Bernard of Clairvaux and Peter Abelard," in *Brill Companion to Bernard of Clairvaux*, ed. Brian Maguire (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 133–168.

of students (including a wealthy Lombard and a certain Otto) at Reims in the early 1130s, but refused to allow study of secular authors.³⁷ Whether or not Hugh was tongue in cheek in his eulogy, his comments reinforce a sense that Alberic pursued a very different attitude to secular learning from Abelard, whose polemic in the *Historia calamitatum* was directed more against the school at Reims, still attracting significant students in the early 1130s than against the school at Laon.

Abelard, Walter of Mortagne and *caritas*

Another person with whom Alberic came into conflict was Walter of Mortagne, who taught at Laon until he became its bishop from 1155 to his death in 1174. The Life of Hugh of Marchiennes describes how Walter, already a teacher with his own students, came to Laon after an argument with Alberic at Reims (ca. 1120).³⁸ Not only were there disputations between clerics and laypeople, but Alberic took exception to Walter's success as a teacher, leading Walter to move his school first to Saint-Remi at Reims, then to Laon, where he may have been helped by Ralph of Laon, who was interested in both the quadrivium and in theology.³⁹ Unlike Alberic of Reims, Walter was a dialectician, probably a student of William of Champeaux, who developed his own 'status' theory of universals, recalled by John of Salisbury, and apparently referred to by Abelard in his *Ingredientibus* gloss on Porphyry (ca. 1118–20).⁴⁰ Alberic's argument with Walter pitted a teacher hostile to secular studies against a dialectician with a

37 Hugh Primas, *Carmen* 18, in *The Arundel Lyrics: The Poems of Hugh Primas*, ed. and trans. Christopher J. McDonough (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 200–207, mentioning (206–207) that Alberic still attracted numerous disciples: 'Adelardus/ valde dives Langobardus;/ generosus puer Oto/ et quam plures pari voto.'

38 *Vita Hugonis Marcianensis*, ed. E. Martène and U. Durand, *Thesaurus novus anecdotorum* 3 (Paris, 1717), cols. 1709–1736, esp. 1712D–1713B; see H. Platelle and R. Godding, "Vita Hugonis Marchianensis († 1158): Présentation, édition critique et traduction française," *Analecta Bollandiana* 111 (1993), 301–384, esp. 317–319. On Walter, see François Petit, "Gauthier de Mortagne," *Analecta Praemonstratensia* 50 (1974), 158–170.

39 Ralph of Laon may have been more influenced by St Anselm than his brother. See Jean Rivière, "D'un singulier emprunt à Saint Anselme chez Raoul de Laon," *Revue des sciences religieuses* 16 (1936), 344–346.

40 John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon*, ed. J. B. Hall and K. S. B. Keats-Rohan, CCCM 98 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1991), 2.17, 81–82; Abelard, *Logica "ingredientibus"* [11], 19–20. There is no reason for assuming that Walter ever taught in Paris.

more positive view of secular learning.⁴¹ Following in the path of Ralph, Walter was able to transform the school at Laon with the intellectual concerns of a new generation, in a way that reflected the influence not just of Anselm of Laon, but also of William of Champeaux.

Walter of Mortagne did not agree with all of Abelard's teachings, as his letter to Abelard makes clear. Nonetheless, this letter also implies that they were in serious communication with each other. Of particular interest is Walter's criticism of a particular description that Abelard had used of God the Son as *portio Patris*, a portion of the Father—a phrase that Abelard used only in an early draft of the first section of the *Theologia 'Scholarium'*.⁴² In a subsequent draft, preserved in Tours, Bibl. Mun. 85, as well as in his *Sententie* and in the full version of the *Theologia 'Scholarium'*, Abelard dropped the problematic term *portio*, which clearly implied that the Son was less than the Father.⁴³ Abelard evidently treated Walter's criticisms with respect.

This Tours manuscript is a direct copy of Abelard's workbook, containing both the *Sic et non* and the heavily annotated version of the *Theologia christiana*, that provided a draft for the main section of the *Theologia 'Scholarium'*, once belonging to a Breton monastery (Ploermel).⁴⁴ Another copy survives at Monte Cassino, likely taken from a copy acquired by Guy of Castello, papal legate to France in the early 1130s and the future Pope Celestine II. The fact that Abelard's ideas, still in gestation, were spreading as far afield as Rome undoubtedly troubled some senior churchmen—like William of Saint-Thierry, for a long time an abbot at Reims and a friend of Alberic.

41 W. Uruszczak argues the letters on marriage that he exchanged with Master A. were not to Alberic of Reims. See W. Uruszczak, "Maître A. et Gauthier de Mortagne, deux lettrés français au XII^e siècle," *Recueil de mémoires et de travaux publiés par la Société d'histoire du droit (Montpellier)* 15 (1991), 121–131.

42 See Walter of Mortagne, *Epistola ad Abaelardum*, ed. Heinrich Ostlender, *Florilegium Patristicum* 19 (Bonn: 1929), 34–40. It quotes the passage *TSch*, 58, 424, in recension Z: 'Sapientia autem cum sit quaedam potentia, discernendi scilicet, quasi quaedam est portio diuinae potentiae.' On Walter's letters, and debate with Hugh, see Ludwig Ott, *Untersuchungen zur theologischen Briefliteratur der Frühscholastik*, BGPM 34 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1937), 126–347.

43 Cf. *TSch*, 58, 424, in *TC* and *TSch*, 1.52, 339; also not mentioned in *Sent. magistri Petri*, 50, 24–25.

44 On this manuscript, see the description, in *Opera theologica II*, ed. Buyteart (1969) vol. XII, 16–23, and Mews, "Peter Abelard's *Theologia Christiana* and *Theologia 'Scholarium'* re-examined," in *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 52 (1985), 109–158, esp. 154–155; reprinted in Mews, *Abelard and His Legacy*.

Of particular importance is a discussion *De caritate* attributed variously to Augustine and Anselm of Laon in different manuscripts of the *Liber pancrisis*, which Robert Wielockx has persuasively argued is by Walter of Mortagne (d. 1174) on the basis of its close relationship to the discussion of *caritas* in the closing part of Walter's letter to master Chrysanthus.⁴⁵ The *De caritate* modifies Augustine's definition of *caritas* as "a movement of the spirit to enjoy God, and one's neighbour for the sake of God" by defining it simply as a movement of the spirit to love God, without invoking Augustine's notion of *fruitio*.⁴⁶ This simplification, which also occurs in *Principium et causa omnium*, is repeated by Abelard in his *Theologia christiana* and *Sententie*.⁴⁷ Abelard is more original than Walter, however, in relating *caritas* to *amor honestus* and to Cicero's definition of friendship in the *De inventione*. Given that Abelard heeded Walter's criticism in revising his early draft of the beginning of the *Theologia scholarium*, he could have drawn on the *De caritate* (as Wielockx suggested), while extending it with the notion of *amor honestus*. In the full version of the *Theologia 'Scholarium'*, Abelard went further than Walter by connecting *caritas* to Cicero's definition of friendship.

In the additional fifth book of the *Theologia christiana* (ca. 1122–27), Abelard did hint at his idea of *caritas* as not pursuing its own interests, explicitly contrasting this to Augustine's definition of love as a movement of the soul to love God and one's neighbour for the sake of God. He also insisted that 'movement of the spirit' had to be interpreted figuratively in relation to God, an idea he promised to discuss elsewhere.⁴⁸ While we cannot be certain if Abelard's reworking of Augustine's definition (which he subsequently corrected) was

45 Robert Wielockx, "La sentence *De caritate* et la discussion scolastique sur l'amour," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 58 (1982–1983), 50–86, 334–356; 59 (1983), 26–45. The letter to Chrysanthus can be found in Martène and Durand, ed., *Veterum scriptorum et monumentorum amplissima collection*, I (Paris, 1724), 831–848. While Wielockx argues that three separate texts derive from an original single text, the second (*Tria sunt genera*) seems to have been recorded separately, perhaps by a student rather than by Walter himself. See Marenbon, *The Philosophy*, 298–300 and more briefly by Perkams (who refers to it simply as from the school of Anselm of Laon), *Liebe als Zentralbegriff*, 114–115, 130, 162, etc.

46 Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana*, ed. J. Martin, CCL 32 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1962), 3.10: 'Caritatem uoco motum animi ad fruendum deo propter ipsum et se atque proximo propter deum; cupiditatem autem motum animi ad fruendum se et proximo et quolibet corpore non propter deum.' See Wielockx, *De caritate*, 69.

47 *Principium et causa omnium*, 83.

48 Peter Abelard, *Theologia christiana* [TC], 5.51, available in ed. Buytaert (1969a), 369–370; Abelard quotes Augustine's definition more correctly in *TSch*, 2.137, 475–476.

influenced by Walter, it seems quite possible that both Abelard and Walter were developing ideas already associated with Anselm of Laon.

Caritas in the Sic et non

Perhaps the most important evidence that even in the 1120s Abelard was thinking about assigning *caritas* a central role within his theological teaching relates to the structure he applies to the expanded version of the *Sic et non* to cover issues of faith, sacraments and charity. In particular he followed a final series of questions about marriage as a sacrament (SN 122–135) with a series of three questions about love (SN 136–38), namely whether *dilectio* of neighbour embraces all people, whether *caritas* alone is a virtue, and whether *caritas* once acquired could ever be lost. While Abelard owed many of his patristic texts to Ivo of Chartres, the questions and texts that he introduced here were his own, expanding on ideas already raised in teachings attributed to Anselm.⁴⁹ Hugh of Saint Victor had formulated the idea that faith, sacraments and works contain the essence of salvation in his *Sententie* (ca. 1127), repeating this in his *De sacramentis*, but emphasizing actions (*opera*) rather than *caritas*.⁵⁰ By contrast, Abelard focused on *caritas* as the foundation of moral behaviour. Perhaps the most intriguing texts he included in the *Sic et non* were two quotations from Cicero, quoted to discuss whether *caritas* once acquired could ever be lost (138: 20–21): one from the *De inventione* about friendship as a good will for another person, for that person's sake, the other from the *De amicitia* about love as something which was found in only among two people, or at least just a few.⁵¹ The former emphasizes friendship as a moral expectation, the latter

49 Evident from the appendix of Peter Abelard, *Sic et non* in Blanche Boyer and Richard McKeon, ed., *Sic et non: A Critical Edition*, by Petrus Abaelardus (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1976–1977), 643–644.

50 Hugh of St Victor, *Sententie de divinitate*, Prologue, in “Ugo di San Vittore ‘auctor’ delle ‘Sententie de divinitate,’” ed. A. M. Piazzoni, *Studi Medievali* 23 (1982), 861–955, esp. 927: ‘In decima parte de fide, quia tria necessaria sunt ad salutem, scilicet fides, opera, sacramenta, quorum unum quodlibet sine aliis uel duo quelibet sine tertio non possunt sufficere cum omnia simul haberi possunt.’ Reiterated in Hugh of St Victor, *De sacramentis*, 1.9, 221–222, PL 176:528A. While Hugh has sixteen references to sacrament in his *Sententie* there is only one to *caritas*; Hugh of St Victor, *Sententie*, 934: ‘per que robusta opera caritatis significantur.’

51 Cicero, *De inventione*, ed. E. Stroebe (Leipzig: Teubner, 1955), 2.55, 150 and Cicero, *De amicitia*, ed. K. Simbek (Leipzig: Teubner, 1917), 20, 53; quoted in *Sic et non*, ed. Boyer and McKeon (1976–1977), 473; the *De inventione* text is also quoted in *TSch*, 1.4, 319.

that *caritas* exists between close friends. Given that St Paul (I Cor. 13:13) had declared that of all the virtues, *caritas* would endure, it was a controversial question whether anyone who had once acquired love, could ever lose it.

Augustine had frequently stressed that faith and sacraments were worthless without *caritas*.⁵² To show that it mattered more than any particular formulation of doctrine, Abelard gave particular attention in his prologue to the *Sic et non* to Augustine's dictum, 'Love and do what you will.'⁵³ As Giles Constable has observed, this phrase, largely forgotten in the early medieval period, seems to have been rediscovered only in the late eleventh century.⁵⁴ Before Abelard, it had been quoted by Robert of Arbrissel (d. 1116), in a sermon to Ermengard of Anjou, wife of the Duke of Brittany in which he castigated hypocrisy in religion.⁵⁵ Abelard also knew that it had been used by Ivo of Chartres, who preferred the theologically safer *habe caritatem* to the more authentic *dilige*, used by Augustine.⁵⁶ Ivo's argument about *caritas* as the foundation of all law was nonetheless crucial for Abelard, as it was for Anselm of Laon. While all agreed that Christian tradition espoused the centrality of love, disagreement could arise if love was invoked to excuse wrong behaviour.

One indication that Abelard was still working out his ideas about the ethics of love is evident from the *Collationes*, perhaps written between 1127 and 1133, as it refers to the *Theologia christiana* rather than the *Theologia 'Scholarium'*. In its second dialogue, Abelard has the philosopher reflect on the cardinal virtues. The Christian does not offer his version of the virtues, but speaks only about supreme good and evil. By contrast, Abelard has the philosopher mention the

52 Augustine, *De baptismo*, ed. M. Petschenig, CSEL 51 (Vienna: 1908), 1.8.11, 156: 'Quid ergo prodest homini uel sana fides uel sanum fortasse solum fidei sacramentum, ubi letali uulnere schismatis perempta est sanitas caritatis, per cuius solius peremptionem etiam illa integra trahuntur ad mortem?'

53 *Sic et non*, Prologue, 98, quoting Augustine, in *Iohannis epistulam ad Parthos tractatus* 7, PL 35:2033C; also used in Sermon 107, PL 39:1958A, attributed to Augustine: 'Dilige ergo, et quidquid uolueris, fac' and sermon 5, PL 46:985A: 'dilige et quidquid vis fac.'

54 Giles Constable, *Love and Do What You Will: The Medieval History of an Augustinian Precept* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 1999).

55 Quoted in Robert of Arbrissel, *Sermo domni Roberti*, in *Les deux vies de Robert d'Arbrissel, fondateur de Fontevraud. Légendes, écrits et témoignages*, ed. Jacques Dalarun, Geneviève Giordanego, Armelle Le Huërou, Jean Longère, Dominique Poiriel, and Bruce L. Venarde (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 460–749, esp. 464: 'Dilige et fac quodcumque vis.'

56 Quoted by Ivo of Chartres, *Decretum*, Prol., PL 161, 48B. On Ivo's interest in love, see Bruce Brasington, "Lessons of Love: Bishop Ivo of Chartres as Teacher," in *Teaching and Learning in Northern Europe, 1000–1200*, ed. Sally N. Vaughn and Jay Rubenstein (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 129–148.

Ciceronian definition of friendship as good will to another, for that person's sake, under the general category of justice, without further exploration.⁵⁷ This implies that he was thinking about love in terms of good will towards another, but had not yet seen how to relate friendship to *caritas*. Only when he had expanded the full version of the *Theologia 'Scholarium'* would he come to a clearer understanding of issues that he subsequently pursues in much more detail in his *Ethica* or *Scito teipsum*. In adopting the Ciceronian definition of friendship as good will, Abelard was subtly criticising Augustine's perspective on the corruption of the human will through original sin and complete dependence on grace. Walter of Mortagne seems to have been cautiously critical of an excessively Augustinian definition of love as enjoyment, implicitly raising the notion of love as an obligation, not seeking personal reward. Abelard went even further than Walter, however, in invoking Cicero on friendship to help explain the Christian ideal of *caritas*.

The Influence of Heloise

Abelard devotes much of the *Historia calamitatum* to contrasting his own lustful passion (*amor*) for Heloise with the consoling love of God, manifest in the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete. Abelard presents himself as being, at least in the years immediately following his criticism of both William of Champeaux and Anselm of Laon, as someone incapable of controlling his lusts. The love (*amor*) to which he succumbed was purely carnal and self-indulgent. While Heloise would challenge this representation of their relationship in her initial response to that narrative, insisting that she was not motivated by any personal self-interest in their relationship, loving him for his sake alone, not for herself, Abelard was initially unwilling to reflect on the ethics of their past relationship. He presented his castration as a providential act that freed him from the chains of lust. When Heloise protested that she desired him for himself, not for what he possessed (*te pure, non tua concupiscens*), she was modifying an idea of St Paul (1 Cor. 13:5) about selfless love, *caritas non quaerit quae sua sunt*, in a way that echoed the Ciceronian dictum that one should love a friend, for that person's sake—without reference for loving someone for the sake of God.⁵⁸

57 See Peter Abelard, *Collationes* [Coll.], 2, 132, available in Giovanni Orlandi and John Marenbon, ed. and trans., *Peter Abelard: Collationes*, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), 144. On the date, see Marenbon (who suggests 1127–1132 is most likely), xxvii–xxxii.

58 *Ep.*, 2, available in Monfrin, ed., 114; cf. *TC* 5.51, CCCM 12, 369.

In her own way, Heloise was synthesising Ciceronian and New Testament ideals, but very differently from Anselm of Laon. She preferred to speak about the purity of her personal love for Abelard, rather than *caritas* in general. By contrast, Abelard was more traditional in the *Historia calamitatum* in perceiving his past behaviour as self-indulgent, without any attempt to justify it as driven by right intention.

There is a direct parallel between the attitudes of Abelard and Heloise in the famous correspondence and those of the controversial male teacher and his unusually gifted female student in the *Epistolae duorum amantium*, of which only excerpts were recorded in the later fifteenth century by the monastic librarian of Clairvaux, Johannes de Vepria.⁵⁹ In Letter 24, the teacher struggles to respond to her question about the nature of love (*amor*):

Love is therefore a particular force of the soul, existing not for itself, nor content by itself, but always pouring itself into another with a certain hunger and desire, wanting to become one with the other so that from two wills one is produced without difference [...] Know that although love may be a universal thing, it has nevertheless been condensed into so confined a place that I would boldly assert that it reigns in us alone—that is, it has made its very home in me and you.⁶⁰

There is an awkward fusion here of the vocabulary of Cicero and dialectic. Initially, the teacher echoes Augustine's definition of *caritas* as a movement of the spirit, but directed not to God, but to creation of a common will, shared *indifferenter* between the two of them. He then draws on the very same passage of Cicero's *De amicitia* that Abelard had quoted within the *Sic et non* (138: 21) to support the idea that *caritas* once acquired could never be lost.⁶¹ The comment about love creating a common will without difference (*indifferenter*) recalls the position in dialectic that Abelard says he forced William of Champeaux to accept during his disputation at Saint Victor, just a few years before the affair

⁵⁹ See n. 6 above.

⁶⁰ *Ep.*, 24, ed. Könsgen (1974), 13–14: 'Est igitur amor vis quedam anime non per se existens nec seipsa contenta, sed semper cum quodam appetitu et desiderio se in alterum transfundens et cum altero idem effici volens, ut de duabus diversis voluntatibus unum quid indifferenter efficiatur. [...] Scias, quia, licet res universalis sit amor, ita tamen in angustum contractus est, ut audacter affirmem eum in nobis solummodo regnare, in me scilicet et in te domicilium suum fecisse.'

⁶¹ For further discussion of this theme, see Mews, "Cicero," 369–384.

with Heloise.⁶² While Abelard was still using *res universalis* as a phrase in the *Dialectica* (ca. 1111–17?), he rejected it completely in his *Ingredientibus* commentary on Porphyry.⁶³ This letter may mark the last time Abelard spoke of a universal as a thing.

By contrast the woman in Letter 25, emphasises not the obligations of love rather than its nature, developing Cicero's comment in the *De inventione* about having a right will towards another for that person's sake, with subtle comment about the need to distinguish true from false intention: "If our love deserted us with so slight a force, then it was not true love. The plain and tender words which to date we have exchanged with each other were not real, but only feigned love."⁶⁴ She alludes to arguments about true friendship identical to those attributed to Jerome in a passage of the *Sic et non* (138.7), that is in fact an original discussion of the obligations of friendship, that combines ideas of Jerome and Isidore: "Friendship that can cease was never true. In a friend, a thing is not sought, but a will. Friendship that can finish was never true. For we are more threatened by the snares of our own than of others."⁶⁵ Letter 25 shares similar thoughts about how, although we ought to show *caritas* to all, in practice we do not love everyone equally, and love that was general had to become special. The woman's preference for the term *specialis* against her teacher's proclivity for *singularis* reflect Heloise's subsequent greeting to Abelard, *Suo specialiter, sua singulariter* (To him who is hers specially, she who is his singularly).⁶⁶ Whereas the teacher's Letter 24 celebrates love as achieved between himself and his beloved, her Letter 25 evokes the special love to which she aspires, but which she thinks has not yet been achieved.

62 HC, 65.

63 Peter Abelard, *Dialectica* [*Dial.*], available in L. M. de Rijk, ed. *Dialectica*, by Petrus Abaelardus (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1970). 185, 186, 574; cf. *LI*, 16.

64 *Ep.*, 25, ed. Könsgen (1974), 15: 'Si amor noster tam facili propulsione discedit verus amor non fuit; verba mollia et plana que inter nos hactenus contulimus, non fuerunt vera sed amorem simularunt.' Cf. Jerome, "Epistulae," in *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Epistulae*, ed. I. Hilberg, CSEL 54 (Vienna: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1910), 3.6, 18: 'Amicitia quae desinere potest, vera numquam fuit.'

65 *Ep.*, 25, ed. Könsgen (1974), 15; cf. *Sic et non* 138.7, 471: 'Amicitia quae desinere potest, vera nunquam fuit. In amico non res quaeritur, sed voluntas. Amicitia quae finiri potest, nunquam vera fuit. Magis enim in insidiis nostrorum periclitamur quam aliorum.' See Mews, "Discussing Love," 130–147.

66 *Ep.*, 25, ed. Könsgen (1974), 15: 'Et nos, licet omnibus integram caritatem exhibeamus, non tamen omnes equaliter diligimus.' On the greeting of Heloise's third Letter after the *Historia calamitatum*, see Mews, *The Lost Love Letters*, 124.

To argue that these letters are ‘below the intellectual level’ of Abelard and Heloise is as misplaced as suggestions that they were inspired by a single author influenced by another couple who happened to share similar vocabulary (such as the word *scibilitas*, a neologism of Abelard, used by the woman in Letter 53).⁶⁷ Letters 24–25 of the *Epistolae duorum amantium* raise questions about love that would acquire central importance in the beginning of the third part of the *Sic et non*, about *caritas*. Quite possibly Heloise herself wrote the reflection on true love that Abelard erroneously attributed in the *Sic et non* (138: 7) to Jerome. We cannot tell how many other texts about love in this part of that anthology she might have brought to his attention. Although Abelard underplayed in the *Historia calamitatum* any intellectual element to his early conversations with Heloise, referring to the letters he exchanged with her simply as an excuse for seduction, they certainly had an impact in shaping his subsequent theological reflection.

Abelard’s theological method in the *Sic et non* extended the method practiced by Anselm of Laon, who also considered *caritas* to be the foundation of human endeavour with a sophisticated reflection on the rhetorical character of human discourse, and his insistence on the positive role of questioning as the path to truth.⁶⁸ All scriptural and patristic assertions had to be evaluated first of all in a spirit of *caritas*—not simply of tolerance or good will to another, but of respect for God’s essential nature as supreme love.

By the mid 1120s Abelard was able to include in the *Theologia christiana* many patristic quotations that he had included in the first full recension of the *Sic et non*, organised into sections about faith in God and Christ, sacraments and charity. This implies that he was already beginning to cover the full range of Christian teaching while at the Paraclete, at the same time as teaching secular disciplines. A copy may have reached Hugh of Saint Victor, who wrote to Bernard of Clairvaux in 1127 about certain questions he had heard were being raised about sacraments.⁶⁹ Abelard never completed any written treatise on

67 See nn. 6 and 7 above.

68 For an excellent exposition of the rhetorical theory that underpins Abelard’s prologue to the *Sic et non*, see Peter von Moos, “Literary Aesthetics in the Latin Middle Ages: The Rhetorical Theology of Peter Abelard,” in *Rhetoric and Renewal in the Latin West 1100–1540: Essays in Honour of John O. Ward*, ed. Constant J. Mews, Cary J. Nederman, and Rodney M. Thomson (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 81–97.

69 Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sancti Bernardi Opera: Epistolae*, 8 vols., ed. Jean Leclercq, C. H. Talbot, and Henri Rochais (Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1957–1977), vol. 8, Letter 77.1, 185. Bernard refers to exactly the same texts as cited by Abelard in *Sic et non* 106.1–106.2, 341, as if Hugh had transmitted them to Bernard, who quotes them without realising they derived from Abelard.

sacraments comparable to the *Theologia 'Scholarium'*, leaving only records of his teaching taken down by students. Abelard's *sententie*, already in circulation in the early 1130s, were sufficiently controversial, however, for Hugh of Saint Victor to respond to them in his *De Sacramentis*.⁷⁰ Hugh was particularly concerned with ideas they were circulating about love.

Hugh of Saint Victor and the *Summa sententiarum on caritas*

While Hugh of Saint Victor composed some short treatises about love (perhaps in the early 1130s?) without referring to any controversial debates, he subsequently became alarmed by ideas in circulation about *caritas* in his *De sacramentis* (II.13–14).⁷¹ Here he devotes an entire chapter to refuting those excessively attached to charity, under the same question as raised in *Sic et non* 138, namely whether charity once possessed could ever be lost:

Certain men wish to say so much about charity that they begin to praise charity as contrary to truth, and yet there is no praise of charity where there is injury of the truth. They say that charity is such and has such great virtue that without it all the other virtues, although in some way they can exist inclined toward good according to the affection of nature, yet cannot, gain the merit of eternal recompense with God.⁷²

While Hugh did not disagree with these claims, he did take issue with precisely their argument that charity once acquired could never be lost:

Thus these men lie about charity in their ignorance of it, since they should not have presumed in that which they were unable to see. They say that charity once possessed thereafter never more is lost. Therefore, I ask them

70 David E. Luscombe, *The School of Peter Abelard: The Influence of Abelard's Thought in the Early Scholastic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 183–197.

71 See the introductions and translations of three short works of Hugh, *De substantia dilectionis*, *De laude caritatis* and *Quid vere diligendum sit*, in Feiss, *On Love*, 137–138 (see n. 4 above).

72 Hugh of St Victor, *De sacramentis*, 2.13.11, 498, PL 176:539BC: 'Quidam de caritate tam multa dicere uolunt, ut caritatem laudare incipiant contra ueritatem; et non est tamen laus caritatis ubi est iniuria ueritatis. Dicunt caritatem talem ac tantam uirtutem habere, ut sine illa relique uirtutes omnes quamuis aliquo modo secundum affectum nature ad bonum procliuem inesse possint, meritum tamen eterne retributionis apud Deum habere non possint.' Translation from Hugh of St Victor, *On the Sacraments of the Christian Faith*, trans. Roy Deferrari (Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1951), 390.

whether they themselves have never lost charity, and would that they had not lost charity because they had retained what they had. But I fear that they have not lost it rather for the reason that they never possessed it.⁷³

Wielockx suggested that Hugh was here referring to ideas of Walter of Mortagne, who does refer in passing to an initial state of *caritas*, such as preserved by David, even when he sinned. Yet, given the politeness of his epistolary exchanges with Walter on Christ's knowledge, it seems more likely that he was complaining about ideas propounded by those students, who maintained (following Abelard's *Sententie*) that David, although manifestly sinful in his sexual misbehaviour, still had *caritas* in his heart:

Finally they are involved in such a cloud of error that, while they contend tenaciously that charity once possessed cannot be lost, they begin to assert that it is retained by certain men, who with deliberation perpetrate not only minor sins but also criminal and damnable ones. They say that the adulterer and homicide David had the charity of God when, serving lust, he gave free rein to turpitude in violating his neighbour's wife . . . and to cover this same turpitude by cruel betrayal, he put that innocent and just man himself out of existence, whose couch he had foully violated.⁷⁴

While Hugh acknowledges that they might use Augustine's argument 'love and do what you will,' he rejected the notion that *caritas* was a human virtue,

73 Hugh of St Victor, *De sacramentis*, 2.13.11, 499, PL 176:540A: 'Sic isti de caritate mentiuntur, nescientes caritatem, quia praesumere non debuerunt in eo quod uidere non potuerunt. Dicunt quod caritas semel habita, deinceps nunquam amplius amittatur. Ego igitur illos interrogo si ipsi caritatem nunquam perdiderunt, et utinam idcirco caritatem non perdidissent quia habitam retinuisent. Sed uereor quod ideo potius non perdiderunt quia nunquam habuerunt.' Translation from Hugh of St Victor, *On the Sacraments*, 391.

74 Hugh of St Victor, *De sacramentis*, 2.13.12, 506, PL 176:546D: 'Postremo tanta erroris caligine inuoluuntur, ut dum pertinaciter caritatem semel habitam contendunt non posse amitti, asserere incipiant eam a quibusdam non solum minora peccata, sed criminalia quoque et damabilia ex deliberatione perpetrantibus retineri. Dauid adulterum et homicidam, caritatem Dei habuisse dicunt, quando libidini seruiens in uxorem proximi sui uiolandam turpitudini frena relaxauit [...] Si talia facientem charitatem habuisse dicunt; quare non etiam in hoc faciendo nihil peccasse dicunt, quia Scriptura dicit: *Qui natus est ex Deo non peccat* (I Jn 5); et quia rursum alibi dicitur: "Habe caritatem et fac quidquid uis?" Si enim hoc uerum est quod talia facientes caritatem retinere possunt, cum iis qui caritatem habent quidquid libet agere conceditur, perfecto quidquid egerint, peccatum non esse comprobatur.' Translation from Hugh of St Victor, *On the Sacraments*, 307. See Wielockx, *De caritate*, 82.

as the only true charity was that inspired by the Holy Spirit. This difference of opinion between Hugh and Abelard on the nature of *caritas* touched on a core difference between the two thinkers. For Hugh, *caritas* was fundamentally a divine gift implanted in the hearts of men. Abelard, by contrast, perceived *caritas* as an existing quality presented (following Augustine, but without his doctrine of original sin) as the foundation from which virtues could grow. His inclusion in the *Sic et non* of the same Ciceronian passage about friendship existing within true friends as alluded to in Letter 24 suggests that he never ceased to be fascinated by its significance.

The view that *caritas* once acquired could not be lost was not just held by Abelard in his *Sententie*. In his letter to Chrysanthus and in the *De caritate* Walter of Mortagne advocated a more sophisticated notion that there were three degrees of *caritas*, holding that only in its third and highest degree it could not be lost.⁷⁵ Rather than Walter stimulating Abelard about love, it seems more likely that Walter was nuancing ideas that Abelard had raised in his oral teaching from discussing texts his *Sic et non*, that had alarmed Hugh.⁷⁶ This doctrine is not explicitly discussed in the *Summa Sententiarum*, an important and influential synthesis of early scholastic theology, introduced in early manuscripts as a treatise of “master Otto, according to master Anselm and master Hugh,” compiled in the late 1130s by an author clearly familiar with the teaching of both these masters.⁷⁷ This text often generally shares doctrinal

75 Wielockx, *De Caritate*, 28: “Tertius vero caritatis status est qui, cum sit caeteris eminentior, non solum salutem praestat homini qui in eo moritur; sed qui semel eum adeptus est, caritatem postea non amittit, nec damnatur.”

76 Potentially relevant to this is a sophisticated scholastic discussion, *Ut autem hoc euidenter*, which influences the *Summa sententiarum*, considered in a forthcoming study of this text by John Wei, to whom I am grateful for sharing it with me.

77 Whether this Otto is the bishop of Lucca (1138–1146) is a matter of debate; see Luscombe, *The School of Peter Abelard*, 198–199 and F. Gastaldelli, *La ‘Summa Sententiarum’ di Ottone da Lucca: Conclusione di un dibattito secolare*, *Salesianum* 42 (1980), 537–546, attributing it to Otto on the authority of several manuscripts, including a rubric, within an unedited *Introductio theologie*, probably from the early 1140s, in which the *Summa sententiarum* is introduced as *Ex tractatu magistri othonis iuxta magistrum ans[elmu]m et m[agistru]m h[ugonem]* in an unedited *Introductio theologie* in Evreux, Bibl. Mun. 19, f. 142^r (ff. 137^r–145^v) and Rouen, Bibl. Mun. 553, f. 136^{ra} (134^{ra}–137^{rb}). In an article rich in historical detail about Lucca, Marcia Colish questions whether its author could be Otto, bishop of Lucca (1138–1146), on the grounds that previous bishops had no intellectual pretensions: see Colish, “Otto of Lucca, Author of the *Summa sententiarum*?” in *Discovery and Distinction in the Early Middle Ages: Studies in Honor of John J. Contreni*, ed. Cullen J. Chandler and Steven A. Stofferahn (Kalamazoo: The Medieval Institute, 2014), 57–70. Yet the intensely personal letter of Hugh of St Victor sent to the Augustinian canons of Lucca ca. 1132, lamenting that

views of Hugh, while buttressing them with patristic testimony in the manner of Anselm of Laon.⁷⁸ Yet it does not repeat Hugh's anxiety about contemporary views of love. Revealingly it is the only twelfth-century text apart from Abelard's *Theologia* and *sententie* that defines *caritas* as honourable love (*amor honestus*) directed to its due end, followed by Cicero's definition of friendship as a good will to another person, for that person's sake.⁷⁹ In this respect, its author considered that Abelard had made an important contribution to existing discussion.

The treatise of Walter of Mortagne on marriage, which often circulated as the seventh book of the *Summa sententiarum*, on marriage, expands on this interest in the human dimension of legitimate love.⁸⁰ While Walter repeats the traditional patristic justifications for marriage, namely the hope for children and as an escape from fornication, he also recognises that there are other honorable reasons, about which nothing had been written, such as reconciliation for peace, and others that were less than pure, namely beauty inflaming the spirit with love, and the desire for wealth. Yet marriages were quite legitimate, even if couples were originally inflamed by love, as plenty of stories in the Bible made clear.⁸¹ Walter is firm in teaching that delight in sexual intercourse is not sinful in itself, if conducted within marriage, with the right intention,

he could not see them in person, suggests a strong relationship between Hugh and these canons. Bernard's Letter 490 to the abbot of St Victor, recommending Peter Lombard as coming to Paris from Reims, mentions that this was at the suggestion of the bishop of Lucca (Humbert, bishop 1125–1134). The fact that in 1140, Lucca owned the *Sententie* of Hugh (not necessarily the *De sacramentis*), coupled with Hugh's friendship with canons of Lucca, implies Hugh was known there, without proving that Otto could have composed the *Summa sententiarum*; see F. E. Croydon, "Notes on the Life of Hugh of St Victor," *Journal of Theological Studies* 40 (1939), 232–253, esp. 251–252.

78 Luscombe, *The School of Peter Abelard*, 208–213. Thus it includes the definitions of sacrament offered by both Abelard and Hugh of St Victor, while clearly siding with Hugh in emphasizing the certitude of faith, against Abelard's use of *existimatio*; *Summa sententiarum*, 1.1, 4.1, 10.2, PL 176:43B, 117A.

79 *Summa sententiarum*, 4.8, PL 176:126A: 'Charitas est amor honestus qui ad eum finem dirigitur ad quem oportet. Amor est bona erga alterum propter ipsum uoluntas. Unde Tullius: Amicitia est uoluntas erga aliquem bonarum rerum, illius causa quem diligit.'

80 Ibid., 7: *De coniugio*, PL 176:153D–176:172D. A summary of patristic texts relating to marriage circulated as part of the *Sententie Magistri A.*, associated with the school of Anselm at Laon: see *Die Ehelehre der Schule des Anselm von Laon. Eine theologie- und kirchenrechtsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu den Ehetexten der frühen Pariser Schule des 12. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Heinrich J. F. Reinhardt, BGPTMA, NF 14 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1974), 167–244.

81 *Summa sententiarum*, 7.1, PL 176:155AB.

a theme taken over by Peter Lombard, who summarises part of the *De coniugio* in his commentary on St Paul.⁸²

A small, perhaps revealing detail about Walter's interests is provided by a mid twelfth-century manuscript containing various of his letters, including a unique copy of that to Abelard, followed by Abelard's *Confessio fidei universis*, to which rubrics of the heretical capitula have been added. Possibly the manuscript was put together at the behest of Walter himself.⁸³ Copied onto a leaf immediately before these letters is a short poem, written in the voice of a woman, that protests the purity of her love.⁸⁴ It is copied immediately after satirical verses about worldliness in the schools by Petrus Pictor (a native of Saint-Omer, active in the early twelfth century), suggesting that these texts and letters were put together by someone interested in both theology and the ethical demands of love.

Conclusion

The question of the relationship between human and divine love, whether as *amor* or as *caritas*, was one intensively discussed in the schools of northern France in the early twelfth century. Monastic authors like William of Saint-Thierry, Bernard of Clairvaux and Aelred of Rievaulx all offered their own views on a subject much debated outside a monastic environment. Ivo of Chartres and Anselm of Laon had both emphasized the priority of *caritas* in Christian life, but without engaging profoundly in what classical authors,

82 Ibid., 7.3, PL 176:156C; see Peter Lombard, *In I Cor.* 7, PL 191:1585D–191:86C.

83 Charles H. Burnett comments that Paris, BNF lat. 14193 (belonging to St-Germain-des-Prés in the seventeenth century) contains the best surviving copy of Peter Abelard, *Confessio fidei "Universis"* [*Conf.fid. "Universis,"*], available in Charles H. Burnett, ed., "Peter Abelard, *Confessio fidei 'Universis'*: A Critical Edition of Abelard's Reply to Accusations of Heresy," *Mediaeval Studies* 48 (1986b), 111–138, esp. 117–119 and 128–129. I am indebted to Catherina Tarlazzi, preparing a PhD thesis on Walter of Mortagne, for discussion of this manuscript, and for observing that it may be the Laon manuscript printed by L. D'Achery, *Spicilegium* (Paris: 1723), cols. 3:524–3:526.

84 The poem, also preserved in Liège, Bibliothèque universitaire, MS 77, fol. 73, was edited by Walther Bulst: see Bulst, ed., *Carmina Leodiensia* 6, Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Abh. 1 (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1975), 16. It occurs immediately after *Versus de Dominus Vobiscum* by Petrus Pictor: see Petrus Pictor, *Petri Pictoris Carmina*, ed. L. Van Acker, CCCM 25.3 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1972), 49–54, which begins immediately after the *Conf.fid. "Universis,"* but continues on ff. 1r–v; see Van Acker's description in CCCM 25, xcvi–xcviii.

above all Cicero and Ovid, had to say on the subject. The closeness of discussions about love in the *Epistolae duorum amantium* to those raised in a theological context within the *Sic et non* argue strongly in favour of their being an incomplete record of an early exchange between Abelard and Heloise during the years 1115–17. They were talking about love as much as other students in the schools. The male teacher's letters in this exchange are more traditionally Ovidian in their vocabulary, with occasional awareness of Ciceronian ideas about love as existing between intimate friends, but without her sense of the moral obligations of love, stimulated by Cicero's sense that friendship should be directed for the other person alone, not for any personal benefit. She sought to fuse the ideas of Cicero and Ovid about love with the imagery of the Bible in a way that was not so foreign to any monk of Clairvaux, familiar with Bernard's own desire to bring together human and divine love. While Abelard may have not talked about these discussions in the *Historia calamitatum*, referring to the letters he exchanged with Heloise simply as an occasion for lust, there can be no doubt—as many have suspected—that their encounter was a transforming intellectual experience for both of them, that took many years to digest.

Abelard initially focused on linguistic issues in his *Logica 'Ingredientibus'*, rejecting any notion of a 'universal thing' such as he had spoken about in his *Dialectica*. In his *Theologia 'Summi Boni'* (ca. 1120), he dwelt on the benignity manifest in the Holy Spirit rather than on *caritas*, normally understood in strictly theological terms. Only in the *Sic et non* did he begin to think about organizing his teaching into a framework of faith, sacraments and *caritas*, implicitly raising questions he had once discussed with Heloise. By the early 1130s, he had drafted the beginning of his *Theologia 'Scholarium'* with its explanation of *caritas* as *amor honestus* directed to its due end (without specifying initially whether this was God). Subsequently, however (perhaps the mid 1130s) he had expanded this introduction to introduce Cicero's definition of love as good will to another, for that person's sake alone. Abelard's discussion with Heloise in the early 1130s may well have forced him to think further about the role of intention within love, and to think about the nature of redeeming love in his commentary on Romans. Only subsequently in his *Scito teipsum* would he nuance his thinking about love as a good will to another, by acknowledging that sinful actions had to involve consent to a bad will, in contempt of God.

The ideas about *caritas* reported in records of Abelard's *Sententie* were relatively crude compared to those in his own writings, but they provoked alarm among some of his contemporaries, in particular Hugh of Saint Victor—who was devoting his own great synthesis of theology throughout the 1130s, in his treatise *On the Sacraments of the Christian Faith*. Much more thoroughly than either William of Saint-Thierry or Bernard of Clairvaux, Hugh rejected what

seemed to be Abelard's purely human understanding of love. He did not understand the subtleties of Abelard's discussions with Heloise about the nature of love and true intention. In their way, his criticisms of Abelard were not unlike those of Heloise, that he assumed love already existed between intimate friends, rather than as an ideal to be reached. Hugh, however, like William and Bernard, believed that love could only be attained through grace.

Yet there were others in the twelfth-century schools who recognised that there were elements of value in what Abelard had to say about *caritas* in the *Theologia 'Scholarium'*. The author of the highly influential *Summa Sententiarum*, a masterly synthesis of doctrine from the late 1130s, included Abelard's definition of *caritas* as honorable love, directed to its due end, along with Cicero's definition of friendship as good will to another, for that person's sake, as a way of giving a more human dimension to the meaning of *caritas*. Did this definition of love in the *Summa Sententiarum* transmit to the schools of the mid twelfth century a distant memory of Abelard's early discussions on the subject with Heloise?

Abelard and the Jews

Eileen C. Sweeney

As a number of scholars have noted, there is a great deal of complexity and ambivalence in Christian views about Jews and Judaism in the Middle Ages. On the one hand, Christians worship the same God as the Jews; God's revelation had been to the Jews and salvation had come through the Jews in Jesus. Moreover, as Jeremy Cohen points out, the survival of the Jews is a proof of the truth of Christianity because a proof of its roots, of the law given to Moses which Jesus lived by and interpreted.¹ On the other hand, Jews reject Jesus as divine, God as triune, and the 'new law' in the gospels. In terms of complexity and ambivalence on the Jews, Abelard is no exception and, true to his way of dealing with other issues, he tends toward extremes. While working on other aspects of Abelard's works over the years, I had been struck, even shocked, by the coexistence of seemingly contradictory attitudes toward the Jews in his theologies. For, on the one hand, Abelard enthusiastically cites evidence on the ways in which the triune nature of God is clearly, even indisputably, laid out in Hebrew scripture, thus including Jews in those with natural knowledge of the Trinity. On the other hand, however, Abelard moves directly from this observation to invective against the Jews, excoriating them for failing to recognize the truth so clearly laid out for them.² Cohen's work sent me back to Abelard and to works beyond the theologies in order to understand the particular kind of complexity and ambivalence in Abelard's attitude toward Jews and Judaism. My topic, like Cohen's, is the 'hermeneutical Jew,' that is, "the Jew as constructed in the discourse of Christian theology" in Abelard's work rather than any actual encounter with Jews or any concrete effects from Abelard's work on Jews in the period.³

I begin with Abelard's theologies, where Abelard compares the Jews to the philosophers both in knowledge of the divine nature and the Trinity, as well as

1 Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999).

2 *TSB*, 1.24, ed. Buytaert and Mews (1987); *TSch*, 1.86; and *TC*, 1.46, ed. Buytaert (1969a), 69–372, here book 1, 46. Reference is specifically to the eternal generation of the Word in Micah 5:2. See more detailed discussion of this passage below.

3 Cohen, *Living Letters*, 2–3.

in their ethical principles and behavior.⁴ I turn next to Abelard's *Collationes* in the dialogue between the Philosopher and the Jew, connecting and comparing it to the *Commentary on Romans*; both these texts are concerned as well with the comparison between Jews and gentiles in relation to reason and righteousness. An examination of these texts and the role of Jews and Judaism as Abelard understands them show, first, that Abelard's reflections on the Jews are reflections of his own thought and, second, that they have a role to play in the shifting ground of Christian anti-Jewish polemic in the twelfth century. Abelard's *Commentary on Romans* and his *Collationes* are struggling with the same issues and with the same ambivalence about the Jews and their relative goodness compared to the gentiles, the same problematic that motivates the discussion of the Jews in his theologies. Paul's letter to the Romans compares the situation of the Jews and gentiles on the gap between their knowledge of and righteousness toward God.

I will argue, first, that the different versions of the theology show some changes of tone and emphasis and that it is the drive to use and defend reason, dialectic, and pre-Christian philosophical sources that shifts Abelard's view of the Jews. Abelard moves between equating the position of the Jews and the philosophers and *ethnicos* and fairly clearly downgrading the Jewish position vis-à-vis that of the philosophers in ways that are more negative toward the Jews than some of his sources, like Augustine and Origen. In the *Collationes*, I concentrate on Abelard's presentation of the Jew, in which the most fascinating and original part is Abelard's attempt to inhabit the point of view of a Jewish thinker responding to the Philosopher's criticisms. Abelard has been assessed as remarkably tolerant, even pluralist in these passages. I argue that, on the one hand, Abelard does attempt to give a sympathetic picture of the Jewish perspective but that, on the other hand, he presents the Jew as holding views that place him in dialogue with Abelard's own views and criticizing him in terms of his own moral theory. What is perhaps more interesting about the *Collationes*, I want to suggest, is that all three participants are largely Pauline; it is as if Abelard has taken Paul's letter to the Romans and imagined it as a dialogue. By this I don't mean that the Jew and Philosopher agree with Paul's conclusions but that they, along with the Christian, operate in an orbit of

4 Abelard essentially rewrote and reworked his work of systematic theology a number of times in response to condemnations and criticisms. I refer here to the three main rewritings, known as the *Theologia 'Summi Boni'* [TSB], *Theologia Christiana* [TC], and *Theologia 'scholarium'* [TSch]. Buytaert's critical edition notes the passages in common between the different versions. For their dates of composition, see Mews, "On Dating the Works of Peter Abelard," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* 52 (1985), 73–134.

questions and issues which are defined by the issues and values Paul expresses in Romans. I will conclude with some thoughts about how Abelard's commitments to reason and philosophy both broaden his appreciation of the Jews and yet move him toward devaluing their tradition.

The Theologies

Early in the first version of his theology Abelard expresses his frustration with the Jews who, he says, say the right words but don't know what they mean. This, of course, is not a view unique to Abelard and goes back at least to Augustine, who characterizes the Jews as having the signs but not knowing how to interpret them.⁵ Abelard's version of this view is, however, more extremely stated, as a result of his tremendous optimism about the accessibility of the divine nature as triune to Jews and philosophers alike. Like Peter Alfonsi, Abelard compiles a list of texts from Hebrew scripture (supposedly) showing that God is three. Compared to Peter Alfonsi's *Dialogos*, Abelard's list of texts from Hebrew scripture naming the persons of the Trinity is much longer and more elaborately glossed.⁶ Just as he does to defend Plato's account of the world soul as plausible analogue to the Holy Spirit, he asks pointed and rhetorical questions to show the absurdity of non-trinitarian readings.⁷ He presents the Trinitarian reading as the only one possible. How, he asks, can the word by which God creates be anything but co-equal and co-eternal? Why would God need a word if only he existed before creation with no one to hear him? How could "the spirit of God carried over the waters" (Gen 1. 2) mean merely the breath or wind of God since God has neither mouth nor parts?⁸ Abelard includes a special excoriation of the Jews: "they read what is written, and on reading they proclaim it, and on proclaiming it, they do not believe it." The remark is retained in all three versions of his theology.⁹ No man of sane mind, whether Jew or Gentile, Abelard concludes, doubts that God is powerful, wise and good, and

5 See, for example, Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, 3.6.10.

6 *TSB*, 1.24–1.29, ed. Buytaert and Mews (1987). Cf. Petrus Alfonsi, *Dialogue Against the Jews*, trans. Irvn Resnick (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2006). Titulus Six is on the Trinity. For the arguments based on scripture, see 167–176.

7 *TSB*, 1.100–1.104.

8 *Ibid.*, 1.27.

9 *Ibid.*, 1.24; *TC*, 1.46, ed. Buytaert (1969a); *TSch*, 1.86. '[...] quam et scriptam legunt et legend profitentur et profitentes non credunt.'

thus, instructed by natural reason, no one lacks faith in the Trinity.¹⁰ Jew and Gentile, to whom God has announced so much of the Catholic faith, he says, are without excuse, if they do not hear the rest of those teachings pertaining to the salvation of the soul.¹¹

On the surface, Abelard maintains the equivalence of the gentiles and the Jews on their knowledge of God and on their stubborn refusal of the truth and salvation. As Constant Mews points out, Abelard uses the image of the four wheeled chariot of Dindimus, under the authority of the four kings, two Jewish, David and Solomon, and two pagan, Nebuchanezzar and Dindimus, indicating equal reliance on Jewish and Pagan sources.¹² But, as Cohen has shown, equivalence is already a downgrading of the status of the Jews in comparison to the gentiles or pagans in relation to the patristic tradition, for whom by and large Jews are a different 'other', one whose past and continued existence is necessary as testimony to Christian revelation. Second, explicit statements of equivalence notwithstanding, Abelard's tone and level of interest in non-Jews as pre-Christian examples of virtue and faith show where his sympathies lie. "Many (*multi*) among the gentiles and some (*nonnulli*) among the Jews", Abelard writes, "instructed by their teachers, have expressed their belief in the Trinity."¹³ However, Abelard goes on to mention only the Greek and Roman philosophers who accepted the faith when they heard it because of their subtle intelligence (*ingeniorum*) and having been 'armed (*armatos*)' with philosophical reasons accepted the faith when they heard it.¹⁴

In the *Theologia 'Scholarium'*, Abelard seems to begin a parallel invective against the philosophers (to match that against the Jews). But after quoting Paul on how the gentiles, even given their great wisdom, will be given up to shameful vices (Rom. 1, 26–7), Abelard immediately counters with the well known reputation of the philosophers for continence. Nor can they be criticized for not believing in or anticipating the Incarnation, he argues, for not even the writings of the prophets announced this clearly. Abelard also quotes Augustine on Socrates' rejection of Greek popular religion as evidence that philosophers, no matter their outward conformity to pagan beliefs, had different beliefs and practice in private. Instead of moving, as Augustine does, from

10 TSB, 3.100; TC, 4.159; TSch, 2.183–184.

11 TSB, 1.62–1.63; TC, 1.136.

12 TSch, 1.195; TC, 1.131. Constant J. Mews, "Abelard and Heloise on Jews and *Hebraica Veritas*," in *Christian Attitudes Toward the Jews in the Middle Ages: A Casebook* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 83–108.

13 TSB, 1.63; TC, 1.136; TSch, 1.201.

14 TSB, 1.64; TC, 1.136; TSch, 1.201.

the example of Socrates to the need for Christ, Abelard uses Augustine's claim as the occasion to differentiate between the religious beliefs and practices of the masses of people as opposed to the philosophers and as the introduction to the exposition of the "testimony of the philosophers" on the Trinity.¹⁵ That testimony is what is needed to refute the unbelief of the people, refuting the Jews from the prophets and the pagans from the philosophers.¹⁶

The theologies also take up the comparison of the pagans and philosophers versus the Jews in ethical terms. In the *Theologia 'Summi Boni'*, Abelard transitions from the topic of belief in the Trinity before Christ to ethical matters by noting that God, before transmitting the written law or doing miracles, wanted to present among the two peoples certain examples of virtuous men.¹⁷ In the *Theologia christiana*, Abelard greatly expands this topic, adding an entire book devoted to the virtuous pagans. In order to make this case, Abelard makes a number of questionable claims. Amongst them is an association of the life of philosophers in Plato's *Republic*, in which there is no traditional marriage and children are raised communally, with monastic life. Abelard also asserts that the Jews paid less attention to the end or goal of eternal life than Plotinus or Macrobius, instead fixing their attention on early happiness and success.¹⁸ After he gives a long list of examples of virtuous philosophers, Abelard mentions only one example from Hebrew scripture: that of Samson. However, he does so only to raise questions about Samson's final acts, his suicide, normally a sin, and his acting on what he thought was divine command.¹⁹ Abelard also professes himself 'confused' (*in confusionem*) by the way in which the abstinence and magnanimity of the philosophers, praised in the book of Wisdom and recommended by the epistles of Paul, is not understood by the Jews.²⁰ His contribution is to contrast the stories of David, Solomon, and Samson, all brought down by concupiscence, to the virtuous lives of Roman emperors like Titus, Trajan, Vespasian and Valentinian.

I am somewhat surprised by Abelard's willingness to embrace Rome and its rulers as positive role models. Though Abelard is sometimes supportive of kings and nobles, at least certain ones, he has a consistent and instinctive opposition to established power, always taking the position of underdog and

15 *TSch*, 1.111–113; cf. Augustine, *De vera religione*, trans., LCC 6 (1953), 1.1–1.2.

16 *TSch*, 1.114.

17 *TSB*, 1.63.

18 *TC*, 1.64.

19 *Ibid.*, 2.79–2.80. Cf. Augustine's discussion of this in *De civitate Dei*, ed. B. Dombart and A. Kalb, CCSL 47–48 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1955), 1.26.

20 *TC*, 2.87.

those under siege. Nonetheless, Abelard is not breaking new ground here but following both Christian and pre-Christian authors. Abelard cites Jerome's praise of Titus in his commentary on Galatians and positive story about Trajan from the *Life of St Gregory* and Ambrose on Valentinian, and he also borrows liberally from Suetonius' *Lives of the Caesars* to find instances of virtues among the rulers of Roman empire.²¹

Yet there is something striking and perhaps new in Abelard's recounting of the stories of just and virtuous emperors in the way they are juxtaposed to stories from Hebrew scripture showing the *lack* of virtue exemplified by Jews. He has no even hand—no stories of pagan vice to balance Jewish vice, no stories of Jewish virtue to balance pagan virtue. Abelard's praise of Roman emperors shows how far he is willing to go in his determination to use all the means in his power to put philosophy and the Greco-Roman culture from which it sprang in a positive light.²² As many have noted, Abelard is not so much here engaging in anti-Jewish polemic as he is in pro-philosophy, pro-liberal arts polemic.²³ Directly if somewhat awkwardly Abelard moves from praise of the virtuous pagans, saved without baptism after the coming of Christ, to the claim that even more must God's mercy find a way to save the philosophers who lived before the time of Christ but with faith and lives of the most gleaming virtue, and from there to the notion that we stand in need not only of their example of virtue and faith but also whatever they might offer as an aid to all questions of reason.²⁴

While Constant Mews suggests that Abelard's strongest anti-Jewish claims might be in the *Theologia 'Summi Boni'*, a case could be made that it is the *Theologia Christiana* because in this version of his theology, Abelard is most concerned to defend his use of philosophical texts to understand and explain scripture.²⁵ He pulls out all the rhetorical stops in order to make the case for the value of this material and its legitimate use in theology. In order to *increase* the acceptance and esteem for Greek/Roman/Gentile culture, Abelard *decreases*

21 Ibid., 2.109–2.114.

22 Cf. Marenbon, "Introduction," xxxiv–xxxv. As Marenbon notes, this long section does not reappear in the later revision, *TSch*, and he also argues for some shift away from this extremely positive attitude toward antiquity evident in Abelard's more ambivalent remarks in *Ep*, 7. See also Jean Jolivet, "Doctrines et figures des philosophes chez Abélard," in *Petrus Abaelardus (1079–1142): Person, Werk und Wirkung*, ed. Rudolf Thomas, Trier Theologische Studien 38 (Trier: Paulinus, 1980), 103–120.

23 Mews, "Abelard and Heloise," 88–89, 99, 101. Peter von Moos, "Les *Collationes* d'Abélard et la 'question juive' au XII^e siècle," *Journal des savants* 2 (1999), 459, 484.

24 *TC*, 1.115–1.116.

25 Mews, "Abelard and Heloise," 87–88, 99.

and places in an unfavorable light that of the Jews. The result is that Abelard's positive views about the philosophers and virtuous Romans cause Jews to be demoted from their special status compared to other non-Christians as living witness to the truth of Biblical Christianity and its origins.²⁶

The *Collationes*

What many readers have been most struck by in this dialogue (or double dialogue) is Abelard's portrayal of the Jew who speaks in defense of Judaism to the philosopher. While I fully concede that some of this interest is anachronistic, stemming from contemporary interest in interreligious dialogue and religious tolerance, it is clear from a comparison to other texts that Abelard's Jew and the Philosopher's treatment of him are outliers in the literature of the period. Some have argued that Abelard's dialogue does not really belong in the genre of *aversus Judeos* literature because there is no confrontation between Judaism and Christianity (the Philosopher moves on from his conversation with the Jew to a separate conversation with the Christian) and no conversion to Christianity.²⁷ Karl-Wilhelm Merk and Ursula Niggli have gone further, finding in Abelard's text open-minded humanism and even hints of religious tolerance and the finding of common ground.²⁸ Merk and Peter von Moos have noted that the core of Abelard's interest is the role of reason in morality and religion rather than the opposition between Judaism and Christianity directly.²⁹ But of course, even if Abelard's interest is more directly focused elsewhere, the encounter between the Jew and the Philosopher is his chosen instrument for getting to the questions he cares most deeply about. And, of course, his deployment of the topic of the Jews to pursue issues of reason, religion, and ethics,

26 The thesis of Cohen's *Living Letters of the Law* is that over the course of the Middle Ages, this status, which afforded them protection and a certain amount of tolerance, was whittled away. For his account of Augustine's views on the special place of the Jews, see 23–65. The epithet for Jews, 'living letters of the law,' comes from a letter written by Bernard of Clairvaux, exhorting participation in the Second Crusade. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sancti Bernardi Opera*, vol. 8, Letter 363, 311–317.

27 See, for example, Cohen, *Living Letters*, 285.

28 Karl-Wilhelm Merks, trans., "Peter Abelard: Dialogue Between a Philosopher, a Jew, and a Christian [Coll.]," in *The Three Rings: Textual Studies in the Historical Trialogue of Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, ed. Barbara Roggema, Marcel Poorthuis, and Pim Valkenberg (Leuven and Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2005), 123, 137–140.

29 Mews, "Abelard and Heloise," 88–89, 99, 101; von Moos, "Les *Collationes* d'Abélard," 459, 484; Merks, "Peter Abelard: Dialogue," 137.

tells us something about his notions of Judaism and in turn becomes part of the larger discourse about Jews.

Abelard's conversation between the Jew and the Philosopher focuses on three main issues: the relationship of Mosaic to natural law, the meaning and value of circumcision, and the end of ethical life as centered in this life or the hereafter. It has been noted that the Jew has an advantage in Abelard's dialogue because he is never directly confronted by the Christian, but it is also true that Abelard's Philosopher has a freedom Abelard does not have when he writes treatises or commentaries. The understanding and critique of Judaism is a complex problem for Medieval Christians, who are simultaneously committed to the truth of Hebrew scripture and to the invalidity of Judaism after Christ. The Philosopher has no need to save the truth of Hebrew scripture and is free to criticize it as irrational. The Philosopher finds circumcision both irrational and distasteful and argues that whatever overlap there is between natural and Mosaic law, for the rest Mosaic law is superfluous, having no positive moral value whatever. His most important and basic criticism is that natural law alone is sufficient for salvation, even according to Hebrew scripture, in which the pagan Job and the patriarchs before the Mosaic law are judged righteous, a view echoed, he argues, by the prophets' emphasis on justice over sacrifice.³⁰ The Philosopher claims that Hebrew scripture promises only earthly rewards for the fulfillment of the law, which shows, first, the low moral standards of this moral system (they are a 'carnal people' 'who thirst for nothing except earthly things') and, second, that since those earthly rewards have clearly not been forthcoming, something is wrong with the law itself.³¹ The Philosopher's most emphatic point is that many others, notably Job, Enoch, Noah and Abraham were all judged righteous without knowing or keeping Mosaic law, and that other passages, from Proverbs or the prophets, make it clear that justice is what is required, not the keeping of laws governing external action.³² The Philosopher argues as well that the only 'reward (*remuneratio*)' given to the Jews has been loss of the promised land, a loss which makes impossible the full observance of the law.³³ The Philosopher can and does conclude by condemning Mosaic law as a burden and a curse.

30 *Coll.*, 25–27, ed. and trans. Orlandi and Marenbon (2001).

31 *Ibid.*, 53, 27, 49: '[...] tam carnalis populi, quo non nisi terrena sitiebat [...].'

32 *Ibid.*, 20, 25.

33 *Ibid.*, 27. The point is that the law requires that certain practices and sacrifices be performed in the temple in Jerusalem and in Israel; in the diaspora they lack even 'earthly dignity' (*terrene dignitates*), the Philosopher concludes.

The Philosopher's criticisms are grounded in scripture, using one scripture passage to disprove the Jew's interpretation of others and showing contradictions in the Jew's interpretation of the way in which they hang together.³⁴ For Merks, the Philosopher's citation of scripture is an ironic device used by Abelard to show the Philosopher's arrogance. This would be difficult to show since neither the judge nor the Jew in the dialogue make any comment about the Philosopher's argument as unusual in any way. On its own terms and without assuming an editorial perspective, we can say that there is something of a tour de force in this mode of argument by the Philosopher; his point is that he can prove the irrationality of the Jew's religion even if he only takes the premises accepted by the Jew, that is, those from scripture. This is a recognizably Abelardian strategy: his theologies argue analogously, that he can prove the Christian position using only the premises of the Philosopher. But in this context, it is the Jew whose argument is more speculative, a more broad ranging interpretation, explaining the *meaning* behind the giving of the law, and in particular the practice of circumcision, the dietary laws, etc. Though it may be entirely anachronistic—it is impossible to measure how this would have seemed to medieval readers—the Jew comes off as more sympathetic because less arrogant and more thoughtful, and the Philosopher as more literalist and nitpicking, lining up passage against passage without regard for context or spirit.

Abelard's Jew recognizes and values the category of natural law, and he accepts the distinction between the elements of Jewish law which overlap natural law and the other rites, ceremonies, and prohibitions (like those dealing with food and circumcision) as binding and valuable but as somehow extra, over and above what is essential for the moral life.³⁵ He argues that these "corporal works of the law" were instituted by God in order to separate the Jews from other peoples.³⁶ But these practices have more value than merely the control of the people; they enjoin a stricter (*artiores*) way of life which strengthens and makes more secure the holy life, which consists in "the true love of God and man." He even argues that since perfect love (*dilectio*) is enough for happiness (*beatitudo*), then the added rituals acts should by rights gain some additional benefit in this life, such the comfort of greater earthly

34 See Merks, "Peter Abelard: Dialogue," 130.

35 *Coll.*, 28, 43, 45.

36 *Ibid.*, 29: '[...] corporalibus quoque legis operibus eos penitus separare decreuit [...].'

benefits leading to greater confidence and devotion, in turn bringing other unbelievers more easily into the worship of God.³⁷

On circumcision, Abelard's Jew argues that male circumcision is postponed male punishment for the Fall; because Eve sinned first, she gets her punishment right away in the pain of child birth, but that the male punishment comes later. He argues for the fittingness of circumcision—it uses the very instrument that gives life to make the Jews hold to God by inwardly circumcising their hearts from vices, just as they have outwardly circumcised the flesh.³⁸ He also argues that the function of circumcision and the dietary laws is to separate the Jewish people from others by means of the two areas of marriage and food by which different peoples become friends; the point is to cut them off from the Chaldeans, so that they avoid the temptation of mixing with and becoming like the nations.³⁹

John Marenbon points out that the basic outlines of Abelard's view of natural law and its relationship to the Old and New Law shares much of the same ground as the school of Anselm of Laon.⁴⁰ A great deal (though not all) of Abelard's account of circumcision relies on Origen, through the latter's *Commentary on Romans*.⁴¹ With the exception of Abelard's argument that circumcision is delayed male punishment for the Fall, Abelard's arguments, either those given to the Philosopher or the Jew, are not notable, then, for their originality.⁴²

37 *Coll.*, 45. Very early in the conversation, *ibid.*, 17, the Jew lists in some detail the particular elements of Jewish law, which, he says, are as oppressive as their maltreatment at the hands of non-Jews. The Jew lists just those aspects non-Jews, especially Christians, would see as the most difficult and distasteful, rather than what Jews might say about their own practices. I suspect (or at least hope) that Abelard intends the Jew to speak ironically here, articulating his burdens not so much per se, as how they would be seen by Christians.

38 *Ibid.*, 36.

39 *Ibid.*, 34.

40 See Marenbon's "Introduction," in *ibid.*, lviii–lix. Marenbon also refers readers to his "Abelard's Concept of Natural Law," in *Mensch und Natur im Mittelalter*, ed. Albert Zimmermann and Andreas Speer (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1992), 609–621. Anselm of Laon argued that the Old Law applied only to the Jews, distinguished between the elements of the Old Law which overlap with natural law and the gospel teachings, and argued that the reward for following the Old Law was merely earthly, a view expressed by the Philosopher (§24), a claim the Jew very ably argues against (§§40–42). For the Anselm of Laon texts, see Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, 48–50.

41 See below, section 3 for discussion of Abelard's *Commentary on Romans* and his use of Origen's commentary compared to the *Coll.*

42 See the discussion of this argument in Abelard in Shaye J. D. Cohen, *Why Aren't Jewish Women Circumcised? Gender and Covenant in Judaism* (Berkeley: University of California

What is notable and surprising about the views expressed by both the Philosopher and the Jew is not that the Philosopher's views overlap Abelard's but that those of the Jew as well have much in common with Abelard's own ethical views. As the dialogue opens, the Jew accepts readily the Philosopher's notion that one should not simply accept the faith of one's fathers but, on reaching adulthood, not follow opinion but seek the truth.⁴³ Abelard's Jew refers to conscience as binding, calling to mind Abelard's view in the *Ethics* that acting against one's judgment of what is right is a greater sin than following it, even if that judgment is misguided.⁴⁴

Moreover, Abelard's Jew gives an Abelardian justification for Jewish practice/belief. One of the Jew's most important defenses of circumcision is to argue that outward circumcision is an outward sign of the inner circumcision of the heart mentioned in Deuteronomy and Jeremiah.⁴⁵ The scriptural references to 'circumcision of the heart' were regularly used to criticize Jewish observance, accusing the Jews of neglecting the spiritual 'inner circumcision' for the external practice. This is exactly what Origen does in his *Commentary on Romans*, a text Abelard refers to in great detail in his own *Commentary on Romans*. Origen argues that it is only inner circumcision, circumcision of the heart, which Paul in Romans says has value.⁴⁶ Unlike Origen, then, who does away with physical circumcision for the spiritual version, Abelard has the Jew give a quasi-sacramental justification for physical circumcision as the outward and visible sign of the inward and spiritual reality.

Abelard's Jew also insists that the observation of the law 'sanctifies' (*sanc-tificat*), and quotes a number of passages exhorting the Israelites to holiness through following God's commands.⁴⁷ In other words, the Jew argues that it is not mere earthly reward, the literal milk and honey, that Jews seek by fidelity to the law, but the higher spiritual goods of holiness and justice. The law is, he argues, an everlasting covenant, an everlasting relationship, not one merely located at a certain time or space.⁴⁸ What the law elaborates is love of God and

Press, 2005), 88–90. Cohen's thorough study has not found this particular account in any other sources, Jewish or Christian.

43 *Coll.*, 12, ed. Orlandi and Marenbon (2001).

44 *Ibid.*, 14. Cf. *Sc.*, 54–56.

45 *Coll.*, 33. The Jew does not directly quote Deuteronomy 10,16; Deuteronomy 30,6; Jeremiah 9,26 but uses the notion of circumcision of the heart to justify circumcision. See Marenbon, "Introduction," 43, n. 79.

46 Origen, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. Thomas P. Scheck, 2 vols. (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2001), vol. 1, 2.12, 140–143.

47 *Coll.*, 41.

48 *Ibid.*, 40.

neighbor, a love beyond measure.⁴⁹ The Jew defends himself ably against the Philosopher's charge that the Mosaic laws do not describe universal justice but only preferential treatment of fellow Jews, quoting a number of passages citing Jewish obligation to help the stranger, the enemy, the poor, and to refrain from revenge.⁵⁰

The Philosopher and the Jew have a real difference of opinion about the relationship of inner and outer observance, but they agree that it is the inner observance and the core of the law—love of God and neighbor—that matters.⁵¹ The Jew justifies the laws prescribing practices beyond this core in a couple of different ways. First, he argues that God's gives the law—in all its explicit prohibitions and prescriptions—in order to restrain evil and show his concern for human affairs.⁵² His claim is that people benefit from specific and explicit guidance. Later he adds a more substantive account. The 'added laws,' those over and above the requirements of natural law, while they do not constitute a holy life, they do help to secure and protect it.⁵³ Observance of the prescribed rituals and rules make the people more able to keep the principles of natural law.

In this way, we see Abelard has not made the Jewish perspective a mere straw man or caricature; he has moderated the standard criticism of the Jews as concerned only with difficult and arcane practices without reason. Instead he has articulated the Jewish view as placing love and justice as the center of the law and given pragmatic reasons for its specific practices. Where they differ is that the Jew argues that the outer observances are signs of and aids in the development of justice and love. For the Philosopher, outer observances can only have an outer effect and can only have for their reward other outer or worldly benefits; they can not serve one's true moral development but only in the burnishing of one's outer reputation.⁵⁴

The Jew's view of the relationship of the commitments of the heart and outer action is certainly not Abelard's, but neither is it the view he usually critiques. What Abelard objects to most in the *Historia calamitatum* is those who have no interest in the intention or interior of the heart, who are only

49 Ibid., 41. On Abelard's notion of love as the ground of moral action, see also Marenbon, *The Philosophy*, 289–291.

50 *Coll.*, 44.

51 Ibid., 43, 45.

52 Ibid., 14.

53 Ibid., 45.

54 Ibid., 59.

concerned with outward form and observable behavior.⁵⁵ It is true, as I just noted, that the Philosopher is skeptical about whether there is any relationship between inner and outer, any way in which a mere outward practice could affect one's interior state, but the Jew's view is, as Abelard lays it out, a view that is, at least from Abelard's point of view, a respectable alternative, even a kind of 'Catholic' alternative to Abelard's own more 'Protestant' sounding view. To put it less anachronistically, the alternative adumbrated by the Jew is more sacramental, in which the outward practices mirror and even help form inner realities. This kind of view is, of course, expressed in the twelfth century by Hugh of Saint Victor's *De sacramentis* but becomes more central in the thirteenth century.

This raises the question of whether there is anything truly Jewish in the view Abelard ascribes to the Jew. While some have argued that Abelard's presentation of the Jew sprang from real interactions with contemporary Jews, others have demurred.⁵⁶ For Cohen, the Jew is not at all plausible as a contemporary. Abelard, Cohen argues, presents the Jew as the Jew of the Bible "bound to the letter of the law" who "deviates from this antiquated mold" only "to anticipate the teachings of Christianity," as he does, for example, in his connecting of circumcision and original sin.⁵⁷ But whatever the facts of the origin of the views expressed by the Jew in the dialogue, clearly Abelard has given the Jew a defense that would be intelligible to Christians, in part because the rationales he gives are or could be Christian. Abelard presents the Jew as working to achieve the same moral end—love of God and neighbor, and with the same moral standard—the inner state or intention, but simply doing so by different means. We can think of Abelard's as finding common ground, as Aryeh Grabois does when he sees analogies between Judah Halevi's dialogue and Abelard's,

55 See Eileen C. Sweeney, "Abelard's *Historia Calamitatum* and Letters: Self as Search and Struggle," *Poetics Today* 28, no. 2 (Summer 2007), 303–336.

56 For an argument for Abelard's contact with contemporary Jews who may have influenced his depiction of the Jew, see Aryeh Grabois, "The *Hebraica veritas* and Jewish-Christian Intellectual Relations in the Twelfth Century," *Speculum* 50 (1975), 617. See below for J. Cohen's dissent. According to Mews, there are some historians working on showing contacts between Abelard and contemporary learned Jews at Paris whose work should be forthcoming. According to Daniel Lasker, however, there are no parallel Jewish anti-Christian polemics early enough that would have been available for Abelard to draw from. See Daniel J. Lasker, "Jewish-Christian Polemics at the Turning Point: Jewish Evidence from the Twelfth Century," *The Harvard Theological Review* 89 (1996), 161–173. I am grateful to Lasker for discussing possible Jewish sources for Abelard's portrayal of the Jew with me; in his work, he does not find evidence that Abelard could have drawn from such sources.

57 Cohen, *Living Letters*, 286.

even though Abelard cannot have known Halevi's work.⁵⁸ Or, more negatively, like Cohen, we can see Abelard, insofar as he portrays a positive image of the Jew, as creating the 'other' in his own image.

The *Collationes* and *Commentary on Romans*

Ursula Niggli has pointed out that many of the Philosopher's arguments are Paul's arguments from Romans, and, as we have just seen, the issues taken up by the Jew and the Philosopher also turn around topics taken up in Romans.⁵⁹ A closer look at Abelard's own *Commentary on Romans* shows that it reserves its longest digressions and *quaestiones* to natural law versus written law and circumcision. Thus we have two different discussions in two literary forms of these same issues.

When we compare the views he attributes to the Jew in the *Collationes* and the positions Abelard takes in the *Commentary on Romans*, we can see that Abelard gives more ground to the Jew in the *Collationes* than the *Commentary*. While Abelard's Jew argues that love of God and neighbor (broadly understood to include the foreigner and the unfortunate) are the core of the law, Abelard's commentary makes the more standard Christian anti-Jewish (and false) claim that the Mosaic law only commands love of one's friends or benefactor; thus, Abelard argues, Mosaic law is imperfect, awaiting completion in Jesus' version of the law.⁶⁰ Moreover, in the commentary, Abelard describes the transgression of written law by the Jews as more egregious than the Greeks' transgression of natural law.⁶¹ And, echoing the *Theologiae Christiani*, after cataloging the 'disgraceful passions' to which the gentiles descended, Abelard carves out an exception for "the philosophers or users of natural law," since, he argues, "they stood out as much by their faith as by their morals as acceptable to God,

58 Aryeh Graboïs, "Un chapitre de tolerance intellectuelle dans la société occidentale du XII^e siècle: Le 'Dialogus' de Pierre Abélard et le 'Kuzari' d'Yehudah Halévi," in *Pierre Abélard, Pierre le Vénérable: Les courants philosophiques, littéraire et artistiques en Occident au milieu du XII^e* (Paris: Éditions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1975), 641–654.

59 Ursula Niggli, "Abaelards Ideen über die jüdische Religion und seine Hermeneutik im Dialogus," *Jahrbuch für Philosophie* 26 (1994), 58.

60 See Peter Abelard, *Commentaria in Epistolam Pauli ad Romanos* [*Comm. Rom.*], 3.7.6, 191–192.

61 *Ibid.*, 1.2.12, 83–84. For the translation see *Comm. Rom.*, available in Steven Cartwright, trans., *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 132.

as the gentile Job and perhaps some of the philosophers who led a perfectly continent life before the coming of the Lord.”⁶² Abelard also adds a gloss to Paul’s claim that the “doers of the law” rather than the mere “hearers” who will be saved, arguing that since Paul has said earlier that the works of the law do not justify, what he must mean here by ‘doing’ the law is acting spontaneously by the love of God, in which this ‘good will (*bona voluntas*)’ is itself the work done, not the exterior action.⁶³ This is the insertion of Abelard’s own ethical view—that the moral character of an act derives completely from the will (specifically its consent)—into Romans, but at the same time he is further guaranteeing the impossibility of Jewish righteousness.

In the *Commentary* Abelard takes a different perspective on circumcision, neither that of the Philosopher or the Jew in the *Collationes*, though incorporating some of the account articulated by the Jew. The commentary follows Origen and a more standard Christian view of circumcision, both undermining its claim as universal command and understanding its significance allegorically. Abelard insists (as does the Philosopher) that the command to be circumcised pertains only to Abraham and his seed, and thus not to the foreigner or the convert and not to others, like Job, who were nonetheless saved.⁶⁴ In addition and without any sense that it stands in tension with a narrow interpretation of the command of circumcision, Abelard argues that when Paul writes, “circumcision indeed is useful if you observe the law . . .” what he means is that circumcision is useful if it is spiritual—circumcision of the heart—rather than carnal. As useful (i.e., spiritual), circumcision is equally common to Jew and Gentile.⁶⁵ This is a contrary tactic because it makes circumcision *more* rather than *less* common, common to both Jew and Gentile who keep the law that is, Abelard writes, ultimately love.⁶⁶ In both ways, however, Abelard manages to downplay the importance of literal, physical circumcision—in other words, the real practice of circumcision by the Jews.

Like Origen, Abelard interprets Paul’s address to “you who call yourself a Jew” (Romans 2. 17) to draw a distinction between those who are ‘called’ but are

62 *Comm. Rom.*, 1.1.32, 74: ‘de omnibus philosophis vel naturali lege utentibus [...] cum plerique illorum tam fide quam moribus Deo acceptabiles [...]’ See also *Comm. Rom.*, trans. Cartwright (2012), 122.

63 *Comm. Rom.*, 1.2.13, 84; *Comm. Rom.*, trans. Cartwright (2012), 132–133.

64 *Comm. Rom.*, 1.2.15, 87–88; *Comm. Rom.*, trans. Cartwright (2012), 134–135. The long passage from Origen’s *Commentary on Romans* on Romans 2:13 Abelard cites here goes on to argue that the command to offer burnt sacrifice is only a command on *how* to do it rather than *to* do it, should one wish. Abelard cites a paraphrase of Origen’s commentary.

65 *Comm. Rom.*, 1.2.25, 93; *Comm. Rom.* trans. Cartwright (2012), 142–143.

66 *Comm. Rom.*, 1.2.27, 95; *Comm. Rom.* trans. Cartwright (2012), 144.

not really Jews; however, Origen's account of this distinction, though clearly an influence on Abelard, is somewhat different. Origen takes the distinction in an allegorical direction, as distinguishing between those who "possess merely the name of religion and piety but in whom works, knowledge and faith are missing."⁶⁷ He is not interested in the literal matter of who calls themselves a Jew but rather advises that "we discuss these things with greater concern for ourselves than for those who do not come to faith in Christ." The reader is exhorted to become a "true Jew" through "the circumcision given in baptism" who "rests in the law of Christ," rather than the outward but false Jew. The false Jew Origen glosses as the hypocritical Christian who teaches discipline and chastity but is driven by greed and lust. Heretics, those who misinterpret and misappropriate scripture are also false Jews; they steal and commit adultery, with an adulterous understanding of scripture and by stealing "the pearls of the true faith from the Holy Scriptures."⁶⁸

Abelard takes the meaning of the 'outward Jew' more literally than Origen: "they are called outward (*manifesti*) Jews who only in name and by the nation of Judah are named Jews, acknowledging God with the voice outwardly (*foris*) and withdrawing from him in the mind."⁶⁹ Those who are Jews secretly are not outwardly circumcised by a cutting off of the flesh but inwardly but a cutting off of vice and lust. While the Jew of the *Collationes* unites outer and inner, with outward circumcision mirroring the inner circumcision of the heart almost sacramentally, Abelard's commentary sets them up as opposites, describing the secret Jew and his spiritual circumcision in a way that, again, supports his own ethical views, which locate moral action only in the inward act of the will, not in the external action.

Unlike the Philosopher from the dialogue who has no need to explain and justify the events in Hebrew scripture, Abelard in his commentary, like Paul in Romans, must explain why circumcision was instituted for Abraham and his seed. It is, Paul wrote a 'sign (*signum*)' and a 'seal (*signaculum*).'⁷⁰ For Abelard the 'seal' of circumcision as opposed to the (outward) sign signifies the spiritual sons of Abraham (the gentiles) as opposed to the carnal sons of Abraham (the Jews), and the interior righteousness of faith as opposed to the exterior administration of what is called justice (a combination of vengeance

67 Origen, *Commentary on Romans*, 2.11.9, 139.

68 Ibid., 2.11.11, 140.

69 *Comm. Rom.*, 1.2.28–1.2.29, 95: 'Manifesti Iudaei dicuntur quo solo nomine et natione Iudae Iudaei nuncupantur foris Deum uoce confitentes et mente ab eo recedentes.' See also *Comm. Rom.*, trans. Cartwright (2012), 145.

70 Romans 4:11.

and favors).⁷¹ Abelard goes beyond this gloss on the text to consider some questions about circumcision. He asks what circumcision confers or signifies, why it was ordained for male rather than female genitalia, and why on the eighth day. His answers are a combination of allegorical readings of circumcision, and accounts put in the mouth of the Jew in the *Collationes*. From Augustine and Gregory he cites and independently expresses the view that circumcision is the equivalent of baptism, a sacrament of cleansing and forgiveness of sins.⁷² Although he has separated interior and exterior circumcision, one characterizing the false but outward Jew, and the other the secret but inner Jew, here he engages in an allegorical reading of circumcision, making it parallel to baptism; just as exterior circumcision signifies the inner circumcision of the heart, the exterior washing of baptism signifies the interior cleansing of the soul.⁷³ This claim and the one that follows it, the account of why only the male is circumcised, are the same defenses of circumcision offered by the Jew to the Philosopher in the *Collationes*. What Abelard gives in the context of Romans are additional reasons that make reference to Christ. Just as the efficacy of baptism itself does not save without the sacrifice of Christ, so there was no passage to the promised land without the spilling of blood in circumcision. Circumcision itself signifies Christ as conceived without concupiscence, that is without the “uncircumcision of uncleanness.”⁷⁴

Abelard also quotes long sections of Origen’s discussion of circumcision. For example, he paraphrases Origen’s view that circumcision signifies allegorically the cutting of impure flesh from the soul and that the eighth day is proscribed in order to signify not earthly present time (the week) but the kingdom of heaven.⁷⁵ Abelard also cites Origen’s defense of circumcision against ‘Stoic’ critics who voice many of the same objections to circumcision as Abelard’s Philosopher: that it does not seem necessary to signify something mystical by an act that injures children, that involves the shameful parts of the body, and that is an obstacle for belief, and is rejected both because of the pain and shame involved. Origen responds in several ways,

71 *Comm. Rom.*, 2.4.11, 127–128; *Comm. Rom.* trans. Cartwright (2012), 178; cf. *Sc.*, 38–44 where Abelard contrasts divine as opposed to human justice. See also, Eileen C. Sweeney, *Logic, Theology and Poetry in Boethius, Abelard and Alan of Lille: Words in the Absence of Things* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 116–117.

72 *Comm. Rom.*, 2.4.11, 129–130; *Comm. Rom.*, trans. Cartwright (2012), 180. Cf. Augustine, *Nupt. et conc.*, 2.2.24 (not book 1 as Abelard says), Gregory, *Moralia*, 4, 3, PG 75:635B.

73 *Comm. Rom.*, 2.4.11, 130; *Comm. Rom.*, trans. Cartwright (2012), 181.

74 *Comm. Rom.*, 2.4.11, 130–131; *Comm. Rom.*, trans. Cartwright (2012), 181–182.

75 *Comm. Rom.*, 2.4.11, 137–138; *Comm. Rom.*, trans. Cartwright (2012), 188–189.

first noting that the priests, the most excellent and elite of the Egyptians, were also circumcised; he defends the difficulty of circumcision by comparing it with martyrdom, and with it as the offering of only one part of the body is offered, as opposed to the Gospel which asks for one's life.⁷⁶

However, Abelard goes out of his way to cite but disagree with Origen's allegorical reading of the 'second circumcision' of the sons of Israel by the son of Nun. Origen argues that the first circumcision was a cutting off from the worship of idols and the second, from vices of the flesh.⁷⁷ Instead Abelard sides strongly with a pseudo-Augustinian non-allegorical reading; it asserts that the 'second circumcision' was necessary after the wandering in the desert because there were many who had been born after the exodus who had not been circumcised.⁷⁸

In the end, Abelard's *Commentary on Romans* is more literal and more anti-Jewish than Origen's but it is also more allegorical than the *Collationes*. In this latter, the commentary is more traditional than either the dialogues or the theologies. Nonetheless, within the commentary Abelard still manages to interpret Paul's letter and its reflections on the Jews so that Paul expresses Abelard's ethical views.

Putting the Pieces Together

Why would Abelard want to consider the same issues in his dialogue as in his Romans commentary but in such a different way? Maurice de Gandillac made the intriguing suggestion that Abelard was looking for a harmony in himself—between the Nazarene, the Greek, and the Hebraic.⁷⁹ However, the Romans commentary, one could argue, *has* a unified position or at least combines into one voice many of the positions taken by different figures in the *Collationes*. In the *Collationes* Abelard is exploring alternate possibilities as independent, mutually exclusive views. If we knew definitively that the *Collationes* was written first, we could make the argument that its task is to explore the issue as Abelard in effect argues with and against himself, and that the *Commentary on Romans* represents his more fully worked out view. But the

76 Origen, *Commentary on Romans*, 2.13.27–2.13.28, 159–160.

77 Ibid., 2.13.26, 158; Joshua 5:2–9.

78 *Comm. Rom.*, 2.4.11, 142–143; *Comm. Rom.*, trans. Cartwright (2012), 193; cf. Ambrosiaster, *Questiones veteris et novi testamenti*, q. 81, PL 35, 2274.

79 Maurice de Gandillac, "Juif et judéité dans le Dialogue d'Abélard," in *Pour Léon Poliakov: Le racisme, mythes et sciences* (Brussels: Complexe, 1981), 398.

evidence on dating the two texts is neither exact nor undisputed enough to make this argument.⁸⁰ And even if the *Collationes* were written first, it is clearly more than a mere draft or early version of the *Commentary*; it is too elaborate a literary and rhetorical work, too different in its form, tone, and structure from the *Commentary* to be subsumed into it. And even if the *Commentary* represents Abelard's final views more than any of the characters of the *Collationes* or the dialectic of the dialogues as a whole, the *Collationes* in their unusual structure and the daringness of the arguments put in the mouths of the Philosopher and the Jew, is, we can argue, more radical than the *Commentary* and more in tune with the groundbreaking *Ethics*, *Sic et non*, and theologies. In all these works, as in the *Collationes*, Abelard takes more daring positions, submits more questions to the bar of reason, and exposes conflicts and contradictions in the tradition for reason to consider.

Like the *Sic et non*, the *Collationes* is a kind of virtuoso performance; in this case Abelard does not set sources from the tradition against each other, but sets three worked out positions against each other, defending not just one position but three. Moreover, its neutrality is both a tour de force and a challenge to Christian readers. It seems to me that if the dialogue is incomplete and Abelard intended to add a final judgment in favor of Christianity, the tone of neutrality would remain. It has already been set in the formal structure: in that the Philosopher (and, thus, reason) confronts each of the two religions rather than the religions each other. And it has also been set in the Philosopher's opening speech arguing for the need to examine critically one's beliefs rather than accept them on faith and believe without understanding. This stance is explicitly accepted by both Jew and Christian as they begin their defense and puts the emphasis on this examination rather than on any final determination. The need to examine and critique one's beliefs by means of reason fits with Abelard's stated pedagogy in the *Sic et non*, *Historia calamitatum*, and letters in which the emphasis is on the individual working out their own interpretation, digging their own wells rather than drawing water from those dug by others.⁸¹

80 See Mews, "On Dating," 104–126. See Marenbon, "Introduction," xxvii–xxxii. The *Commentary on Romans* was likely written before 1134. Mews now argues the *Coll.* was written between 1130 and 1137 and Marenbon argues that it must have been composed in the middle or second half of the 1123–1135 period, but more speculatively suggests that the most likely date is between 1127–1132.

81 *HC*, 69, 83–85; *Ep.*, 7, 285, 291–292; and the prologue in *Sic et non*, ed. Boyer and McKeon (1976–1977), 91–97. See also Sweeney, *Boethius, Abelard and Alan of Lille*, 64–65, 122–123 and Eileen C. Sweeney, "Rewriting the Narrative of Scripture: 12th-Century Debates Over Reason and Theological Form," *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 3 (1993), 13–16.

Many have noted the detail with which Abelard describes the suffering of the Jews, and a few have also noted his parallel description of his own situation as marginal, as persecuted outsider.⁸² But it is not simply the accident of Abelard's experience or even his psychological make up (both of which seem to incline him to see himself as martyr) that stands behind this sympathy with and apparent affirmation of the validity of the position of the Jews. Abelard often, as I have argued elsewhere, takes a stance undermining the apparent and obvious surface appearance of things and shows a willingness, even a compulsion for viewing *le monde à l'envers*.⁸³ In the *Historia calamitatum*, he argues that persecution is a sign of God's grace—rather than the contrary, which is what the Philosopher of the dialogue says; in the *Ethics* he argues that Judas is not culpable for turning Jesus over to the authorities.⁸⁴ So too in the dialogue he confounds expectations in composing a defense for the Jew.

For all his combativeness, Abelard has a gift for empathy, the sort of emotional and imaginative equivalent of his intellectual ability to take different positions. In his laments he takes on the perspective of David and Samson (whom, as I noted earlier, he rather strongly criticizes in the *Theologia Christiana*). Abelard presents them, along with and the other figures from Hebrew scripture in his series of six laments, with great emotional depth and sympathy as those who are part of the long arc of providence, but who, in the meantime, experience loss, suffering, and persecution without knowing how it is that all things will work to the good.⁸⁵ So too Abelard takes up the perspective of the contemporary Jew, describing both his plight and his commitments with depth and dignity.

This does not seem to have been a successful strategy in gaining Abelard readers. There are apparently very few manuscript copies of the *Collationes*, compared with many times more for Peter Alfonsi's dialogue. Christians of the Middle Ages, like today's political partisans, preferred, it seems, the kind of debate that offers as many opportunities as possible for whistles of approval and catcalls of disdain.

There are limits, of course, to Abelard's willingness and ability to take on the perspective of the Jew. I have already noted that in the places where Abelard

82 Gandillac, "Juif et judéité," 391; von Moos, "Les *Collationes* d'Abélard," 468–469. Von Moos goes even further to make the connection between the suffering of the Jews and Jesus' suffering, and on Abelard himself as persecuted, exiled from his Parisian school by a kind of stupid and cruel orthodoxy.

83 Sweeney, "Abelard's *Historia Calamitatum*," 303–336.

84 HC, 108; Sc., 66.

85 Sweeney, *Boethius, Abelard, and Alan of Lille*, 95–114.

gives to the Jew a reasonable defense of his practices, those defenses seem constructed to satisfy Christian sensibilities rather than truly to outline and gain sympathy for a genuine other. And while many commentators have noted the speech Abelard puts in the Jew's mouth about how Jews continue to suffer, I think it is too much to say, as some have, that it is offered as a critique of Christian persecution of the Jews. Abelard only places in the mouth of the Jew a view like that of the Greeks' toward slavery: it is a brute fact about the universe; it is, as Michael Walzer describes Euripedes' view of slavery, oppressive but not unjust; it calls for resignation rather than rebellion.⁸⁶ The reader or audience isn't called upon for more than a kind of vague and disinterested pity. Analogously, Abelard presents the condition of the Jews as somehow lamentable, but, as Bernard Williams notes about the Greeks on slavery, necessary.⁸⁷ Unlike the Greeks and Abelard, what Hebrew scripture describes, the insight that founds Judaism itself, is of the injustice of slavery, imagining the possibility of a different order along with the obligation to create it. Abelard calls on no one to imagine a different order or acknowledge any active part in creating the order of persecution the Jew describes.

Though the attitude, content, and method of Abelard's reflections on the Jews in theologies, the *Commentary on Romans* and the *Collationes* are very different, they do share something important: arguments based on and in defense of reason, a standard on which Jews are found (more or less) wanting. Abelard in this way confirms the thesis of Amos Funkenstein about the way in which the use of rational arguments (and not just the use of scripture texts) to argue against the Jews came to dominate Christian anti-Jewish literature in the twelfth century.⁸⁸ What I have explored in this essay is how Abelard's particular relationship to reason and philosophy shapes his placement of the Jews, his views in turn contributing to the shifting place of the Jew in twelfth century Christendom. Abelard's 'contribution' to this transformation is that his desire to legitimize reason and raise the status of pre-Christian philosophy expressed directly in the theologies and *Commentary on Romans* and expressed through the form of the *Collationes* leads him to downgrade the status of Jews and Judaism. We certainly see in Abelard's taking on the perspective of neutral reason in the *Collationes* the erosion of any special relationship between Judaism

86 Michael Walzer, *Exodus and Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 23.

87 Bernard Williams, *Shame and Necessity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 116–117, 124.

88 Amos Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 172–201. See also Anna Sapir Abulafia, "Jewish-Christian Disputations and the Twelfth-Century Renaissance," *Journal of Medieval History* 15 (1989), 105–125.

and Christianity; it is just another alternative to be evaluated by reason. Thus we see in Abelard what Jeremy Cohen has noted is in the process of transformation during this period: the placement of Jews as on the same level as pagans, Muslims, and heretics. Abelard's dialogue and Romans commentary also sound a cautionary note about the virtues of natural law: its development owes as much to its status as competitor to the Old Law (and as a means of downgrading it) as it does to the virtues of pure reason. In Abelard to a large degree, Paul's point in making the law of Hebrew scripture and natural law parallel—to show that *all* are sinners—is muted.⁸⁹ Instead, in Abelard, the emphasis is on the laws themselves, rather than their sinful adherents, as laid out side by side for comparison with the Old and New Law.

In all these texts, Abelard thinks of the question of the Jews as linked to the question of the gentiles—which means, for Abelard, the question of their relationship to philosophy and to reason. For Abelard, the status of the Jews is bound up with his drive to expand and defend the use of reason and Greek philosophy in theology, with his position on reason and philosophy driving his position on the Jews rather than vice versa. Moreover, the particular issues on which the Jews are weighed in the balance and found wanting are those on which Abelard himself charts a distinctive course; thus the Jews become means used to further his own philosophical ends. But my argument is not that since the Jews are not Abelard's ultimate concern, we cannot make much of his role in the larger movement from tolerance toward persecution of Jews traced by Cohen and Funkenstein. Abelard's construction of the Jew reflects his larger theological project, but it is exactly those larger concerns—the role of reason and philosophy in theology, the nature of moral action—that help to drive the changes in the position of the Jew in Christian theology, a larger narrative in which Abelard does play a role. In the theologies, Abelard constructs his support of pagan virtue and learning as a zero-sum game; for pagan culture to become more valued, Jewish virtue and learning must become less so. In the *Commentary on Romans* and in the Philosopher's position in the *Collationes*, Abelard constructs his moral theory by locating it over against the negative model provided by Jewish practice. Though Abelard is clearly feeding already established lines of anti-Jewish thought, he need not have used the Jews as

89 Abelard does note in the prologue that Paul's intention is to combat pride and bring about true humility among both Romans and Jews, who are each claiming superiority over the other. However, as I have noted above, more of Abelard's energy in his own commentary seems focused on the relative merits of Jews versus gentiles, in many cases giving the palm to the gentiles. See *Comm. Rom.*, Prol., 43; and *Comm. Rom.*, trans. Cartwright (2012), 87.

the negative touchstone against which to sharpen his own views. The proof of this is the exception to this strategy in the Jew's self defense and justification of Jewish law. In the latter case, I can imagine Abelard being unwilling to allow any perspective—even that of the Jew—go without the strongest arguments he could muster. That is the positive side of Abelard's intense commitment to reason—it can lead to a search for reasons for other perspectives than his own, to the examinations of the reasons both for one's own beliefs and those of others. The negative side we can also see clearly, however, in Abelard's combative reasoning, in his desire to convince his coreligionists of his view by casting the opposing view as 'judaizing'. Thus, we must conclude, not only is natural law related to Medieval Christian ambivalence about Jews and Judaism, so is Medieval speculative thought's most honored achievement: the ethos of rational examination of one's values and beliefs.

Divine Omnipotence and the Liberal Arts in Peter Damian and Peter Abelard

Julian Yolles

Summary

Any attempt to study Peter Abelard's scholarly identity vis-à-vis the liberal arts is fraught with difficulty due to the complexity of his thought, the intricate ways in which he reworks existing ideas and reacts against others, and the haphazard survival of the works of his forbears and contemporaries.¹ One way to circumvent these issues is to take a particularly well-documented line of argument in one of Abelard's works and to compare his methodology with that of an intellectual before him. One such opportunity presents itself par excellence in the analysis of what is called 'divine omnipotence', that is the analysis by means of dialectic and patristic authority of the problem of what it means for God to be omnipotent, which takes place in the third book of Abelard's *Theologia 'scholarium'*. This subject was put on the map as a matter requiring careful analysis in an eleventh-century treatise in the form of a letter by Peter Damian. It is for this reason that Peter Damian will be the starting-point of our present discussion—but a caveat must be made in doing so, however: in comparing Peter Damian and Peter Abelard (and indeed any of the later thinkers who will be discussed), one must keep in mind that they were active in widely differing intellectual and social environs, and that the comparative discussion is in no way intended to suggest that the two are necessarily commensurable. In fact, it is the hope that the present discussion will bring out both similarities and dissimilarities alike in a nuanced way in order to get a better grip on the methodological idiosyncrasies of these intellectuals, and on the cultural and intellectual environments that shaped them. First, I intend to compare Peter Damian and Peter Abelard's approaches to the question of divine omnipotence. Second, it will be worthwhile to explore in brief the approaches of the

¹ This paper is an expanded version of a paper delivered at Leeds International Medieval Congress, 13 July 2011. I am extremely grateful to Babette Hellemans for all of her thoughtful advice and guidance, who also supervised my work: Julian Yolles, "The Rhetoric of Simplicity: Faith and Rhetoric in Peter Damian," MA thesis (Utrecht: Utrecht University, 2009), which touched on similar problems dealt with in this paper.

major theologians of the twelfth century on this matter, to see whether either of the two intellectuals under discussion had a significant impact on later treatments of this topic.

Introduction

In tracing back Abelard's treatments of divine omnipotence to Peter Damian and by comparing the issue to other thinkers, we will seek to obtain a clearer view of the methods that both of these intellectuals employed, and what place they occupy within the dynamic intellectual movements of this period. Let us turn first to Peter Damian. In his famous letter about divine omnipotence, Peter Damian or Petrus Damiani (1007–1072), an eleventh-century cardinal bishop of Ostia and abbot of the hermit community at Fonte Avellana, makes the following statement about the place of the liberal arts in a theological discussion of divine omnipotence:

And assuredly on this matter the ancient authors on the liberal arts, not only the pagans but also those of the Christian faith, discoursed at length, but none of them dared to proceed into such insanity as to brand God with the mark of an impossibility, and, especially if he was a Christian, to have doubts concerning His omnipotence, but in such a way did they dispute on the consequence of necessity or impossibility in accordance with the pure virtue of the art alone, that they made no mention of God in these arguments.²

2 'De qua nimirum questione veteres liberalium artium discussores, non modo gentiles sed et fidei christianae participes prolixius tractaverunt, sed nemo illorum in hanc ausus est prosilire vesaniam, ut Deo notam impossibilitatis adscriberet, et praesertim si Christianus fuit, de illius omnipotentia dubitaret, sed ita de consequentia necessitatis vel impossibilitatis iuxta meram solius artis disputavere virtutem, ut nullam in his conflictibus Dei facerent mentionem.' Throughout, the edition used is Peter Damian, "Epistulae," in *Die Briefe des Petrus Damiani*, ed. K. Reindel, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Epistulae, Die Briefe der deutschen Kaiserzeit, 4 vols. (Munich: Monumenta Germaniae Historica, 1983–1993), 3, Epistula 119, 354. For the PL text with French translation and commentary, see Peter Damian, "Epistulae," in *Lettre sur la toute-puissance divine*, ed. and trans. A. Cantin, Sources Chrétiennes 191 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1972). For a recent translation with introduction, see Peter Damian, "Epistulae," in *The Letters of Peter Damian*, trans. O. J. Blum and I. M. Resnick, 6 vols. (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1989–2005), 4, 344–386. All translations are my own.

Although Peter Damian had been a student of both 'secular' and 'sacred' knowledge, his position on the relationship between the two was complex and ambiguous.³ His hagiographer John of Lodi (d. 1106) presents Peter Damian's life story as one of a conversion: having studied and taught the liberal arts for some years at Parma, he made a radical decision and turned to the contemplative life of a hermit.⁴ In the large extant corpus of his letters, Peter Damian utters fierce and sometimes virulent objections to the liberal arts, especially if they are applied to the study of Scripture.⁵ Yet despite his frequent and many objections to the application of the liberal arts to the study of the Scriptures,⁶ in many cases he appears to do just that: when discussing, for instance, whether a solitary hermit ought to say the *dominus vobiscum* during Mass, Peter Damian addresses the matter by referring to the laws of grammar, and uses dialectic in his argument that the liturgical formula must not be changed, regardless of the circumstance of the liturgy.⁷ The clearest example, however, of Peter Damian's

- 3 The matter of Damian's relation to the liberal arts has long been a topic of debate. One of the first to treat the matter at length was J. A. Endres, *Petrus Damiani und die weltliche Wissenschaft*, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters 8.3 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1910), 23–30. For a recent appraisal of the matter, see L. Montenz, "Disce deum pluraliter declinare," in *La grammatica di Cristo di Pier Damiani: un maestro per il nostro tempo*, ed. G. Innocenzo Gargano and L. Saraceno (S. Pietro in Cariano, Verona: Gabrielli, 2009), 65–74. A. Cantin's study on this matter remains of importance: A. Cantin, *Les sciences séculières et la foi: les deux voies de la science au jugement de S. Pierre Damien (1007–1072)* (Spoleto: Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, 1975).
- 4 As Damian is reticent about his past, we are largely dependent on his only contemporary biographer, John of Lodi. A modern edition of the life of Damian can be found in S. Freund, *Studien zur literarischen Wirksamkeit des Petrus Damiani* (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1995), 177–265. For a useful overview and critique of biographical studies of Damian, see K. Reindel, "Neue Literatur zu Petrus Damiani," *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung der Geschichte des Mittelalters* 32 (1976), 405–443. For the sources and manuscript tradition of John of Lodi's *Vita*, see G. Lucchesi, "Per una Vita di San Pier Damiani," in *San Pier Damiano. Nel IX centenario della morte (1072–1972)*, 4 vols. (Cesena: Centro studi e ricerche sulla antica provincia ecclesiastica ravennate, 1972–1978), vol. 4, 7–66, esp. 8–22.
- 5 See especially the letter known as *De sancta simplicitate*, in Peter Damian, *Die Briefe*, 3, Epistula 117, 316–329, as well as the letter *De perfectione monachi* (Damian, *Die Briefe*, 4, Epistula 153, 13–67).
- 6 Note that in the time of Damian, 'theology' as a university discipline was not yet in existence.
- 7 Damian, *Die Briefe*, 1, Epistula 28, 248–278. For discussions of the content of this letter, see A. Kolping, *Petrus Damiani: Das Büchlein vom Dominus vobiscum* (Düsseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 1949); W. Ferretti, "La comunità cristiana secondo S. Pier Damiani o l'opuscolo 'Dominus Vobiscum,'" in *Studi su San Pier Damiano in onore del cardinale Amleto Giovanni Cicognani*, Biblioteca Cardinale Gaetano Cicognani 5 (Faenza: Venerabile Seminario Vescovile Pio XII, 1961), 49–62.

use of the liberal arts can be found in the letter that has become known as *De divina omnipotentia*, in which he frequently uses the art of dialectic when discussing the nature and extent of divine omnipotence. As we will see, some fifty years later Abelard's position vis-à-vis the use of liberal arts in theological matters would be completely different.

Peter Damian's Objections to Jerome

In early 1065 Peter Damian was a guest of Desiderius, abbot of Monte Cassino, who would later become Pope Victor III.⁸ At meal time, a passage from Jerome's letter to Eustochium in praise of virginity was read. This celebrated twenty-second letter in his collected letters was written in 384 C.E. to a Roman matron to persuade her to persist in maintaining her vow of chastity. After quoting the words of St Paul, who cries out to God to release him from the sinful bonds of his body, which maintains its inclination toward sin despite all of his self-inflicted chastisements, Jerome urges Eustochium not to relinquish her guard at any moment, since even the saintly apostle himself was faced by such fleshly temptations. Jerome presses on:

Beware, I pray, lest someday God should say about you: 'The virgin Israel has fallen: there is none who can raise her up.'⁹ I will say it boldly: although God can do all things, he cannot raise a virgin up after she has fallen. He is able to free one who has been corrupted from punishment, but he is unable to offer her the crown.¹⁰

Jerome's bold statement on God's abilities and divine omnipotence incited a discussion between Peter Damian and his host. Upon Peter Damian's objection to the church father's statement, the good abbot Desiderius attempted to explain to his guest why one need not take offense at this passage, and proceeded to offer his own interpretation of Jerome's statement. After leaving

8 See Reindel's introduction to the letter: Damian, *Die Briefe*, 3, 341. Compare Cantin, *Lettre*, 31–32, for a dating to the autumn of 1066. Cantin suggests that the occasion of Damian and Desiderius' discussion was that of the vigil of the feast of St. Jerome, at which the saint's life would have been read.

9 Amos 5:2.

10 Jerome, "Epistulae," 22.5: 'Cave, quaeso, ne quando de te dicat deus: "Virgo Israhel cecidit: non est, qui suscitet eam." Audenter loquor, cum omnia deus possit, suscitare virginem non potest post ruinam. Valet quidem liberare a poena, sed non valet coronare corruptam.'

Monte Cassino, Peter Damian felt he had not quite adequately expressed the nature of his issue with Jerome's remark, nor presented his opposing arguments sufficiently, and therefore resolved to write his celebrated letter on divine omnipotence.¹¹

Peter Damian begins his letter by recounting the circumstances that led to his debate with the monks of Monte Cassino, and, though hesitantly at first, expresses his objections to the passage that was read, arguing that, even though the author in question was the venerable Jerome, the important thing was *what* was being said, not by *whom*. He proceeds to explain that Jerome's statement was not pleasing to his ears, for it seemed dishonest to him to ascribe an impossibility to God so lightly:

This statement, said I, has never been able to be to my liking. For I do not pay attention to the person by whom it is said, but to what is being said. Indeed, it seems to me much too dishonest that to Him, who is able to do all things, an impossibility is attributed so lightly, unless it is with the sacrament of a more profound understanding. But you, on the other hand, responded that the statement (that is, that God cannot raise up a virgin after she has fallen) was fixed and had sufficient authority.¹²

After this introduction, Peter Damian paraphrases Desiderius's response to his objection:

Then, touching upon many a subject with lengthy and extended argumentations, at last you brought your conclusion to this dialectical statement, saying that God is unable to do this for no other reason than

11 For a recent discussion of this letter and a useful analysis of the problems associated with Damian's position, see M. Malaguti, "Il *De divina omnipotentia* di s. Pier Damiani. Sulla via di un' ontologia del mistero," in *Pier Damiani: L'eremita, il teologo, il riformatore (1007–2007)*, Atti del XXIX Convegno del Centro Studi e Ricerche Antica Provincia Ecclesiastica Ravennate Faenza-Ravenna, 20–23 settembre 2007, ed. M. Tagliaferri (Bologna: Centro Studi e Ricerche Antica Provincia Ecclesiastica Ravennate, 2009), 155–167. L. Moonan's discussion of this letter remains of importance for an analysis of Damian's own dialectical and rhetorical techniques: L. Moonan, "Impossibility and Peter Damian," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 12 (1980), 146–163.

12 Damian, Epistula 119, 343–344: 'Haec, inquam, fateor, nunquam potuit michi placere sententia. Non enim a quo dicatur, sed quid dicatur attendo. Nimis scilicet inhonestum videtur, ut illi, qui omnia potest, nisi sub altioris intellegentiae sacramento, tam leviter impossibilitas ascribatur. Tu autem e contrario respondisti ratum esse, quod dictum est et satis autenticum, Deum videlicet non posse suscitare virginem post ruinam.'

because He does not wish it. To which I said: If God is unable to do anything which He does not wish, then He does nothing except that which He wishes; therefore He is entirely unable to do that which He does not do. Consequently, therefore, to speak freely, God does not rain because He is unable to do so [...] These things and many others God does not do because He does not wish to, and because He does not wish to, He is unable to do them. It follows, therefore, that whatever God does not do, He is entirely unable to do. And that, now, seems so absurd and laughable, that this claim not only cannot apply to omnipotent God, but cannot even apply to an incapable human. For there are many things, which we do not do, and yet are able to do.¹³

After long and prolix argumentations, Desiderius finally arrives at the following dialectic statement: "God is unable to do so for no other reason than because He does not wish to." For Peter Damian, however, this only aggravates the situation, as he demonstrates by formulating a syllogism based on Desiderius's reasoning. The argument is clarified in three steps. Firstly, if God is incapable of doing what He does not wish and, secondly, if He does nothing except what He wishes, then thirdly, He is unable to do that which He does not do. As Irvén Resnick demonstrated, Peter Damian's syllogistic representation of Desiderius's solution is highly misleading and bordering on sophistry, for it requires Damian to make Desiderius's solution universally valid to make it the major premise (while in fact Desiderius could claim there are only some things which God cannot do because He does not wish to do them), and it also involves having to convert the minor premise, which is to make the minor premise ("God does nothing except what He wishes") the major premise ("God is incapable of doing what He does not wish") in this syllogism. All of this leads Irvén Resnick to mark this as an 'invalid syllogism'.¹⁴

13 Ibid.: 'Deinde longis atque prolixis argumentationibus multa percurrrens ad hoc tandem diffinitionis tuae clausulam perduxisti, ut diceres Deum non ob aliud hoc non posse, nisi quia non vult. Ad quod ego: Si nichil, inquam, potest Deus eorum, quae non vult, nichil autem, nisi quod vult, facit; ergo nichil omnino potest facere eorum quae non facit. Consequens est itaque, ut libere fateamur, Deum hodie idcirco non pluere, quia non potest [...] Haec et alia multa idcirco Deus non facit, quia non vult, et quia non vult, non potest. Sequitur ergo, ut quidquid Deus non facit, facere omnino non possit. Quod profecto tam videtur absurdum tamque ridiculum, ut non modo omnipotenti Deo nequeat assertio ista congruere, sed ne fragili quidem homini valeat convenire. Multa siquidem sunt, quae nos non facimus, et tamen facere possumus.'

14 Resnick, *Divine Power*, 65.

Here it may be relevant to point out that Peter Damian's misleading use of dialectic and rhetoric was not unique to him, but is in fact very similar to the deliberate misrepresentations made by Lanfranc of Bec (c. 1005–1089), a compatriot of Peter Damian who had also studied dialectic at Parma, of Berengar of Tours's arguments concerning the Eucharist. Lanfranc evinces the same method of paraphrasing and rewording his opponent's arguments in order to set up an easily trounced straw man.¹⁵ Clearly both Peter Damian and Lanfranc had been taught the subtleties of dialectic, which they were then able to marshal in order to turn their opponents' words against them.

In order to prove how ridiculous Desiderius's interpretation of Jerome is, Peter Damian offers an example and says that, according to Desiderius's reasoning, if, on a given day, it does not rain, therefore God does not wish it to, and therefore He is unable to make it rain.¹⁶ Ridiculing Desiderius's argument, Peter Damian says that it is absurd to claim that God is unable to do that which He does not do, since this is a claim that does not even apply to the most incapable humans.

Peter Damian ends this section of his letter with a number of vicious remarks about those who continue to apply the principles of dialectic to central tenets of the Christian faith, claiming that this entire discussion does in no way pertain to the discussion of divine power, but rather to the field of the art of dialectic, and to the method of constructing arguments and syllogisms—in short, a problem of the liberal arts on the human scale of things, since the liberal arts cannot hope to pierce the sacred mysteries of God. For Peter Damian, the question at hand has more to do with verbal virtuosity than with the rule of faith or honest moral conduct:

Since this matter, therefore, has been proven not to apply to the discussion of divine power, but rather to skill in the art of dialectic, and not to the virtue or the substance of things, but to the manner and fashion of speaking and to the arrangement of words, this matter, which is bandied about by secular boys in schools, does not have a place in the sacraments

15 See for a discussion T. J. Holopainen, *Dialectic and Theology in the Eleventh Century* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), 59–67.

16 Compare Damian, *Epistula* 119, 353: 'Secundum naturalem namque variae vicissitudinis ordinem potest fieri, ut hodie pluatur, potest et fieri, ut non pluatur. Sed quantum ad consequentiam disserendi, si futurum est ut pluatur, necesse est omnino ut pluatur, ac per hoc prorsus impossibile est ut non pluatur.'

of the Church. For it does not pertain to the rule of faith or to honest moral conduct, but to effluence of speech and the sheen of eloquence.¹⁷

Let us take a brief moment to analyse the rhetorical virtuosity that Peter Damian has put into these two sentences: the *concinnitas* or structural harmony is outstanding, as the first sentence proceeds with two antithetical pairs of clauses of *non* [...] *sed*, and the number of nouns contained in the clauses slowly but steadily increases in a *gradatio* or climax (*potentiam, peritiam, virtutem vel materiam, modum et ordinem disserendi consequentiamque verborum*).¹⁸ Nearly every clause, moreover, ends with a pattern of *cursus* or rhythmical prose: *divinae potentiam* (*cursus tardus*), *pertinere peritiam* (*cursus tardus*), *consequentiamque verborum* (*cursus planus*), *Ecclesiae sacramentis* (*cursus velox*), *ventilatur in scolis* (*cursus planus*), *pertinet honestatem* (*cursus velox*), *verborumque nitorem* (*cursus planus*).¹⁹

In the second half of the letter occur Peter Damian's famous or perhaps infamous statements concerning God's independence from and indeed absolute control over the laws of nature. Peter Damian discusses the restoration of virginity as a way of undoing the past, and considers some of the objections that have been raised by dialecticians to this argument. Granting that, concerning creation, it is true that something cannot possibly exist and not exist simultaneously (a tenet of dialectic that has become known as the principle of non-contradiction), Peter Damian stresses that we cannot simply apply this law of nature to nature's creator. To substantiate this claim, he offers several examples of biblical miracles that are clearly contrary to the laws of

17 Ibid., 355: 'Haec igitur questio quoniam non ad discutiendam maiestatis divinae potentiam, sed potius ad artis dialecticae probatur pertinere peritiam, et non ad virtutem vel materiam rerum, sed ad modum et ordinem disserendi consequentiamque verborum non habet locum in ecclesiae sacramentis, quae a secularibus pueris ventilatur in scolis. Non enim ad fidei regulam vel morum pertinet honestatem, sed ad loquendi copiam verborumque nitorem.'

18 For a similar analysis of the incongruity between Damian's invective against rhetoricians and his own rhetorical flourish, see Peter Godman, *The Silent Masters: Latin Literature and its Censors in the High Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 28–31.

19 For more on the medieval system of rhythmical prose called *cursus*, see G. Lindholm, *Studien zu mittellateinischen Prosarhythmus*, Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis: Studia Latina Stockholmiensia 10 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1963). For a discussion of Damian's usage of *cursus*, see T. Janson, *Prose Rhythm in Medieval Latin from the 9th to the 13th Century*, Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis: Studia Latina Stockholmiensia 20 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1975), 43–45.

nature, but have been effected by God nonetheless. The following passage is especially pertinent:

When one considers it, it is clear that in the beginning of the world as it came into being, the creator of things altered the laws of nature to the purpose He wished; indeed, in a way, He made nature itself, so to say, against nature. For is it not against nature that the world was created out of nothing, whence it is said by philosophers that nothing is made from nothing? That animals are created not from animals, but from lifeless elements, merely at a command? That a sleeping man loses a rib and has no pain? That from a man alone a woman is created without a woman, and that out of a single rib all the various members of the human body are formed?²⁰

More than anything, Peter Damian's denial of the applicability of the laws of dialectic to God have earned him the reputation of an anti-dialectician, and, in the past, even that of an anti-intellectual.²¹ We will return to this issue, and the passage quoted above in particular, after discussing Abelard's treatment of divine omnipotence.

Abelard's *Theologia 'Scholarium'*

Let us turn now to Peter Abelard and the work now known as the *Theologia 'scholarium'*—one of his later works, also known as the *Introductio ad theologiam*, and referred to by Abelard as simply the *Theologia*.²² Peter Abelard's

20 Damian, Epistula 119, 368: 'Consideranti plane liquido patet, quoniam ab ipso mundi nascentis exordio rerum conditor in quod voluit naturae iura mutavit, immo ipsam naturam, ut ita dixerim, quodammodo contra naturam fecit. Nunquid enim contra naturam non est mundum ex nichilo fieri, unde et a philosophis dicitur, quia ex nichilo nichil fit? Animalia non ex animalibus, sed ex stolidis elementis solo iussionis imperio creari? Dormientem hominem costam perdere, nec dolere? De solo viro feminam sine femina fieri et in una costa omnia hominis membra distingui?'

21 See for instance Holopainen, *Dialectic*, 47, and W. Hartmann, "Rhetorik und Dialektik in der Streitschriftenliteratur," in *Dialektik und Rhetorik im früheren und hohen Mittelalter: Rezeption, Überlieferung und gesellschaftliche Wirkung antiker Gelehrsamkeit vornehmlich im 9. und 12. Jahrhundert*, ed. J. Fried, Schriften des Historischen Kollegs: Kolloquien 27 (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1997), 73–95, here 75 and 84.

22 In early print editions, the text was also known as *Introductio ad theologiam*. For the most recent and extensive study of the work (although the section on divine omnipotence

position on the nature of the relationship between the liberal arts and theology is perhaps less ambiguous.²³ In the preface of *ThSch*, for instance, Abelard writes:

For this purpose it is allowed to the faithful to read the texts of the secular arts and the books of the pagans, so that, having learned the different kinds of speech and eloquence and the ways of argumentation and the nature of things, we may be able to reach, through those arts, whatever pertains to an understanding and to the beauty of Sacred Scripture, either to defend its truth or to support it.²⁴

The work, begun in 1133 after Abelard had returned to teach at the school of Sainte-Geneviève in Paris, sets out to offer students a summary repository of sacred knowledge to serve as an introduction to the Scriptures, and is partly an abbreviated version of his earlier work *Theologia christiana*.²⁵ The first book treats the fundamentals of the Christian faith, including the sacraments and the Trinity, ending with attestations of prophets and pagan philosophers. The second book opens with a defence of the study of pagan literature, and delves deeper into issues on the Trinity raised in the first book. The third book of *ThSch* was completed by the late 1130s and revised after Abelard's condemnation at the Council of Sens in 1141, and was therefore written some seventy years after Peter Damian's letter on divine omnipotence. The third and final book deals mainly with the extent of God's power and the correct way of discoursing about divine omnipotence, ending with a reflection on divine wisdom and goodness.²⁶

receives little attention), see I. Klitzsch, *Die 'Theologien' des Petrus Abaelardus: Genetisch-kontextuelle Analyse und theologiegeschichtliche Relektüre* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2010). An excellent and up-to-date introduction, along with a German translation, can be found in Matthias Perkams, ed., *Theologia 'Scholarium': Lateinisch—Deutsch* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2010).

23 For a still useful and extensive study of Abelard's use of the *trivium* in theology, see Jean Jolivet, *Arts du langage et théologie chez Abélard*, 2nd ed. (Paris: J. Vrin, 1982), esp. 229–320.

24 *TSch*, 1.1: 'Ad hoc quippe fidelibus saecularium artium scripta et libros gentilium legere permissum est, ut per eas locutionum et eloquentiae generibus atque argumentationum modis aut naturis rerum praecognitis, quicquid ad intelligentiam vel decorem sacrae scripturae, sive ad defendendam sive ad astruendam veritatem eius pertinet, assequi valeamus.'

25 So remarks Abelard in the preface to *TSch*.

26 For a good analysis of Abelard's treatment of divine omnipotence, see S. P. Bonanni, *Parlare della Trinità: Lettura della Theologia scholarium di Abelardo* (Roma: Pontificia università gregoriana, 1996), 318–326.

So what is divine omnipotence according to Abelard? He begins his discussion by addressing the question of how God can be all-powerful while humans appear to be able to do many things, such as walking and speaking, which God is unable to do. It is here that Abelard introduces the concept of *dignitas*: he explains that God cannot eat or speak because this would abrogate from His *dignitas*; when discussing the extent of a being's power, one must use its *dignitas* as a starting-point. The term is difficult to interpret, but has been defined by John Marenbon as the "intrinsic value" of a thing, and by Matthias Perkams as "everything which contributes to the relative excellency of a single thing in comparison with other members of the same species of the being in question."²⁷

Abelard next dedicates a lengthy section to explaining that God is only able to act in the one way He does act. He had made this controversial statement first in the fifth book of *ThChr*, and the discussion there is replicated nearly word-for-word in *ThSch*. One of the components of Abelard's argument was the claim that God cannot act contrary to reason, an argument he found in the *Quaestiones veteris et novi testamenti* that was falsely attributed to Augustine in the Middle Ages. In this work, the author argues against the Arians that the Son is not inferior to the Father and created by the Father, since, if this were the case, there would have been a time when Truth, which is the Son, did not exist, which is contrary to reason.²⁸ "Although God can do all things," Ps.-Augustine continues, "yet He does that which accords with reason, in order that He remain free from blame."²⁹ In the same treatise, Ps.-Augustine argues that "although God can do all things, He only does that which befits His truth and justice."³⁰

Moreover, Abelard could have found a similar position in the work of a contemporary, the influential abbot of St Heribert, Rupert of Deutz (c. 1075–1129), who wrote a short work called *De omnipotentia dei* in which he argues that any statement concerning God must be in accordance solely with what is found in Scripture—indeed, that God cannot do anything that lies outside of the truth

27 Marenbon, *The Philosophy*, 240; Matthias Perkams, "Divine Omnipotence and Moral Theory in Abelard's Theology," *Mediaeval Studies* 65 (2003), 99–116, here 106.

28 Cf. John 14:6.

29 Ps.-Augustine, *Quaestiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti*, ed. A. Souter, CSEL 50 (Vienna: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1908), 83.6: 'Quamquam enim omnia possit deus, sed illud facit quod convenit rationi, ut inreprehensibilis perseveret.' See also *ibid.*, 116.1: 'Quamvis enim omnia possit deus, nihil tamen facit quod sit rationi absurdum.'

30 *Ibid.*, 97.1: 'Nam omnia quidem potest Deus, sed non facit nisi quod conveniat veritati eius atque iustitiae.'

of Scripture.³¹ Since God is said to be just, therefore all of His actions must be said to be just, and therefore He cannot do what is unjust. Rupert refers to the same passage in Jerome that vexed Damian so much. To claim as Jerome does, says Rupert, (namely that God cannot restore virginity) is not to detract from God's power, but to commend His justice.³²

Rupert of Deutz defends Jerome's statement with Scriptural authority and he does take a different stance than Peter Damian, but his arguments do not display the finesse of subtle dialectic and grammar that Abelard marshals in his discussion of Jerome's famous passage. After making his controversial claim that God can only do as He does, Abelard turns to Jerome:

Nor can He [i.e. God] wish or do anything contrary to what is congruent with reason. Indeed no one can wish or do reasonably that which is in discord with reason. And this Saint Jerome appears to have intended, when, exhorting the virgin Eustochium to keep observing her saintly virginity, he said: "The virgin Israel has fallen: there is none who can raise her up." I will say it boldly: although God can do all things, he cannot raise a virgin up after she has fallen.³³

Abelard therefore interprets Jerome's statement as follows: God is a rational being; it is therefore impossible for Him to will or act contrary to reason. When Jerome says that God cannot restore virginity once it has been lost, he means that this is contrary to reason, and thus contrary to God's will. Abelard then quotes at length a hagiographer of Jerome, who defends Jerome's words by stating that God's *non posse* or 'not being able' is a way of saying *non velle* or

31 Rupert of Deutz, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus* ed. J.-P. Migne, Series Latina 170 (Paris: Migne, 1844–1864), col. 478C: 'Ipse, qui extra veritatem Scripturarum facere aut velle nihil potest omnipotens Deus.'

32 Ibid., col. 478A: 'Itaque cum dicit quispiam, ut ille notae et constantis fidei vir praedictus Hieronymus, cum omnia possit Deus, suscitare virginem non potest post ruinam, valet quidem liberare a poena, sed non valet coronare corruptam, nequaquam omnipotentiae derogat, sed inflexibilem iustitiam commendat.'

33 *TSch*, 3.37–3.38: 'Nec ipse quicquam [...] contra id quod rationi congruit aut velle aut agere queat. Nemo quippe quod a ratione dissidet, velle vel agere rationabiliter potest. Quod diligenter beatus Hieronymus attendere visus est, cum Eustochium virginem ad observandum sanctae virginitatis propositum adhortans ait: "Virgo Israel cecidit, et non est qui suscitetur eam. Audacter loquar. Cum omnia possit deus, virginem post ruinam suscitare non potest."'

'not wishing', and that Jerome merely formulated it in this way in order to exhort Eustochium to virginity, not in order to detract from divine omnipotence.³⁴

Peter Damian would certainly have agreed with the approach of the hagiographer quoted by Abelard of situating Jerome's remark in its context and not taking it in too much of an absolute and literal sense.³⁵ Yet simply substituting Jerome's *potest* ('God is able to') with *vult* ('God wishes'), as Desiderius had done, would not have counted on much approval with Peter Damian, nor would Abelard's generalizing statement that God can only act as He does, as discussed above. The same passage is also discussed in an earlier work of Abelard, *Sic et non*, which in turn relies heavily on Augustine's widespread *Enchiridion*, where Augustine argues that God only does good things, for it is even good that He allows evil to be in the world.³⁶ Augustine continues to argue that if God did not wish to allow evil into the world, He could easily do so, since God can just as easily do what He wishes as not allow to exist what He does not wish. With this authority, Abelard is able to claim in the *Theologia* that, since all of God's actions are good, and God is good, God can only do as He does.³⁷ To claim otherwise would be to argue that God acts contrary to His own nature, which He cannot do, and contrary to reason, which, as Abelard had already concluded from the quoted passage of Ps.-Augustine, He also cannot do.³⁸

Note here Abelard's approach of using dialectic in discussing patristic authority, and so builds on his *Sic et non*, in which various apparent contradictions among the Church Fathers are resolved by means of dialectical reasoning, and contrast this with Peter Damian's questioning of Jerome and

34 The hagiographer now known as Ps.-Sebastian of Monte Cassino, listed as number 3870 in *Bibliotheca hagiographica latina antiquae et mediae aetatis*, ed. Socii Bollandii (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1949); for the text, see Ps.-Sebastian of Monte Cassino, *Sanctuarium seu Vitae sanctorum*, ed. B. Mombrizio, 2 vols. (Hildesheim and New York: Olms, 1978 [= Paris, 1910]), vol. 2, 31–36, here 33: "non posse" dei "non velle" alio omni modo dici poterat verbo.'

35 In Peter Damian, *Epistula* 119, 344, Damian says that whenever statements such as those in Jerome are found in Scripture or in other patristic writings, one must tread carefully and be sure not to expound them too boldly and liberally according to their literal sense: 'Si quando tamen tale quid in mysticis ac allegoricis contingat nos reperire scripturis, caute potius et reverenter accipiendum est, quam iuxta litteras audacter et libere proferendum.'

36 *Sic et non*, 35, ed. Boyer and McKeon (1976–1977); Augustine, *Enchiridion*, 96, used also in *TSch*, c. 3.48.

37 *TSch*, 3.36: 'Quod si illud solum quod facit, fieri ab eo bonum est, profecto illud solum quod facit facere potest, qui nihil facere potest nisi quod ab eo fieri bonum est.'

38 As noted above, the *Quaestiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti* were considered to be an authentic work of Augustine in the Middle Ages.

his statement that Jerome's remark on God's omnipotence has always been "unpleasing to his ears."³⁹

While taking the Augustinian principle of the *Enchiridion* as his starting point, Abelard continues the discussion of the relationship between God's will and power, giving the following example:

Likewise, it is therefore very well said concerning God that, when He has wished something, He is also able to do something, so that in doing all things His wish and ability accompany each other in such a way that, what He does not wish, He is in no way whatsoever able to do, nor is He able to do something at a time when He does not wish for it to happen, just as now He cannot make it rain, when He does not wish to; and He does not wish for it to rain now, because He deems it improper to rain now, and judges this time not to be fit for rain, because of some reasonable cause, which, however, is hidden from us. Indeed, if He should be able to or wish to make it rain now, naturally He can do so and also wishes to do so at such a time, in which it does not befit God to do that which is removed from all reason.⁴⁰

Abelard's reasoning can be roughly summarized as follows: What God does not wish He is not able to do, for His will and ability are coextensive. If, for example, God wanted it to rain now, it would rain; since it does not rain, therefore He does not wish it to and therefore cannot make it rain now. In a fascinating turn of events, Abelard uses the very same example used by Peter Damian, in a similar context but with the opposite intention as Peter Damian had done. Peter Damian had used this example to refute and ridicule Desiderius's explanation of Jerome's remark, whereas Abelard uses it to support an interpretation that is very similar to that of Desiderius.⁴¹ In fact, Abelard goes on to replicate nearly word-for-word Desiderius's position as formulated by Damian, claiming that

39 Damian, Epistula 119, 343–344.

40 *TSch*, 3.45: 'Proinde itaque atque optime de deo dictum est, quod subest ei posse, cum voluerit, ut videlicet in singulis faciendis ita eius potestas et voluntas sese comitentur, ut, quod non velit, minime possit, nec possit etiam tunc facere, quando, ut fiat, non vult, veluti modo pluviam facere non potest, quando eam facere non vult; qui hoc ideo modo non vult, quia id modo fieri non convenire considerat, nec hoc tempus pluviae idoneum censet, quadam utique rationabili de causa, licet nobis occulta. Si igitur pluviam nunc facere possit aut velit, eo utique tempore id facere potest aut etiam vult in quo id deum facere non oportet quod ab omni dissonat ratione.'

41 See also the brief discussion of this passage in Resnick, *Divine Power*, 67–69, as well as that in J. Bauke-Ruegg, *Die Allmacht Gottes: Systematisch-theologische Erwägungen zwischen*

God can only do what He in fact does. After giving the rain example, however, he introduces the concept of propriety: God cannot make it rain now because He does not wish to; and He does not wish to, because He does not deem it proper to rain now because of some rational cause; and it does not befit God to do something that lacks reason.

After giving this example, Abelard turns to criticism that this detracts from God's excellence, and that even we humans are able to do many things which we do not do, to which Abelard responds by reverting to his earlier concept of *dignitas*, arguing that our abilities or inabilities should not be used as the starting-point for discussing divine power.⁴² It is possible that Abelard knew Peter Damian's letter, which, like many of his other letters, began to circulate even during Damian's life, and were not merely confined to Italy: there are several twelfth-century manuscripts extant containing *De divina omnipotentia* from northern French provenance.⁴³ Another possibility is that both Peter Damian and Abelard go back to an otherwise unknown source.⁴⁴

Although Peter Damian had represented Desiderius's solution as a new-fangled and dangerous concoction of dialectic and 'theology',⁴⁵ the idea of the coextensive nature of God's power and will is shared by the earlier hagiographer

Metaphysik, Postmoderne und Poesie (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1998), 462–464, esp. 463, n. 306.

42 *TSch*, 3.45: 'Quantum igitur estimo, cum id tantum deus facere possit quod eum facere convenit, nec eum quicquam facere convenit quod facere pretermittat, profecto id solum eum posse facere arbitror quod quandoque facit, licet hec nostra opinio paucos aut nullos habeat assentatores, et plurimum dictis sanctorum et aliquantulum a ratione dissentire videatur. Hoc quippe, inquit, estimare, multum divine derogat excellentie, ut videlicet id solummodo facere possit quod quandoque facit, et id solum dimittere quod dimittit, cum nos etiam ipsi, qui longe impotentiores sumus, multa etiam facere vel dimittere possumus que nequaquam facimus vel dimittimus.'

43 For the list of manuscripts containing Damian's letter on divine omnipotence, see Peter Damian, *Die Briefe*, 3, 341.

44 Concetto Martello argues that Damian's thought on divine omnipotence was mediated by Anselm of Canterbury, especially in book 2 of *Cur Deus homo* and *De potestate et impotentia*, although Anselm does not present a similar argument in his extant writings. See C. Martello, *Pietro Abelardo e la riscoperta della filosofia: Percorsi intellettuali nel XII secolo tra teologia e cosmologia* (Roma: Aracne, 2008), 80–81. For a study of the similarities between Damian's theology and that of Anselm, see A. Cantin, "Ratio et auctoritas de Pierre Damien à Anselme," *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 18 (1972), 152–179.

45 See *infra* for the problems associated with using the term 'theology' in connection with Damian.

of Jerome, which possibly dates perhaps from the ninth century,⁴⁶ and ultimately goes back to Augustine's *Enchiridion*.⁴⁷

After discussing Jerome's passage and claiming that God can only do as He does, Abelard explains that in the sentence "he can be saved by God", the subject is human, and therefore the verb 'can' refers to an ability of human nature. However, in the sentence "God can save him", since God is the subject, the verb refers to divine ability, not human. Likewise, when we say that something is possible, we mean that it is not incompatible to the nature of any creation; however, when we say that something is possible for God to do, we refer to divine nature rather than that of creation. In short, Abelard uses the art of grammar to make distinctions between the meaning of the modal verb "to be able to" when it is applied to creation and to God.⁴⁸

Dignitas and Divine Power

Toward the very end of the third and final book of *ThSch*, Abelard makes an important statement on the relationship between divine omnipotence and the laws of nature, which it will be worthwhile to quote in full:

And when they say that those things, which occur through miracles, are impossible, or occur contrary to nature, as, for instance, that a virgin gives birth or that a blind man continues to see, they consider merely the usual course of nature or the primordial causes of things, and do not consider the excellence of divine power, which clearly is able, by force of its own nature, to do whatever it has decided upon, and to alter, contrary to custom, the very natures of things in any way that it wishes. But if even now He would create a man out of the earth's clay or bring forth a woman from a man's rib, just as was done with the very first parents of mankind, there would be absolutely no one who would not consider that to be done contrary to nature or beyond nature, on account of the fact that, as was said before, the arrangement of primordial causes would in no way be sufficient for this purpose, unless God imparted, contrary to custom

46 See the discussion on the issues of dating this *vita* in A. Vaccari, *Scritti di erudizione e di filologia*, 2 vols. (Roma: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1952–1958), vol. 2, 31–51, at 41–46; see also W. Berschin, *Biographie und Epochenstil im lateinischen Mittelalter*, 5 vols. (Stuttgart: A. Hiersemann, 1986–2004), vol. 3, 68, n. 169.

47 Augustine, *Enchiridion*, 96. See also *De spiritu et littera*, 5.

48 *TSch*, 3.49.

and out of His own free will, a certain power to things, so that in this way it would be possible for it to happen—and with this will He also was able to create all from nothing.⁴⁹

As at the beginning of his discussion of divine omnipotence, Abelard argues that a distinction between the Creator and His creation needs to be made, between God and nature: just as the ability of a being needs to be considered differently in accordance with its inherent *dignitas*, in the same way we cannot assume that God is subject to the laws of nature which He himself created. Abelard utilizes strikingly similar biblical examples to counter precisely the line of argumentation Peter Damian had used. Making a subtle philosophical distinction between actions of creations and those of the Creator, Abelard argues that God can do things that seem to be at odds with the laws of Nature, but are nevertheless in accordance with reason, since they are in accordance with God's inherent excellence and *dignitas*. Here the brilliance of Abelard's concept of *dignitas* shines through, which he developed from the Ps.-Augustinian notion that God can only do those things that befit His justice.

Peter Abelard's teachings on divine omnipotence were to have a lasting impact. Although Abelard's views on divine omnipotence were among those condemned at the Council of Sens in 1141,⁵⁰ and disputed by William of Saint-Thierry (c. 1085–1149) in his treatise against Abelard,⁵¹ Peter Lombard (c. 1100–1160) included Abelard's ideas on the proper way of discoursing about

49 Ibid., 3:94: 'Qui etiam cum ea quae per miracula fiunt, impossibilia dicunt vel contra naturam fieri profitentur, ut virginem parere vel caecum ulterius videre, profecto ad usitatum naturae cursum vel ad primordiales rerum causas respiciunt, non ad excellentiam divinae potentiae quam videlicet constat ex propria natura quicquid decreverit posse et praeter solitum ipsas rerum naturas quocumque modo voluerit permutare. Quod si nunc quoque hominem ex limo terrae formaret vel feminam de costa viri produceret, sicut in primis actum est parentibus, nemo utique esset qui contra naturam vel praeter naturam id fieri non censeret, eo, ut dictum est, quod primordialium causarum institutio ad hoc minime sufficere posset, nisi deus praeter solitum propria voluntate vim quandam rebus impertiret, ut hoc inde fieri posset qua videlicet voluntate et ex nihilo cuncta potuit creare.' Cf. *ibid.*, 3:51.

50 For the full list of charges of Abelard's heretical statements, see *Enchiridion symbolorum: Definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*, 31st ed., ed. H. Denzinger (Barcinone: Herder, 1957), 179–180.

51 William of St. Thierry, *Disputatio adversus Petrum Abaelardum*, in *Opuscula adversus Perum Abaelardum et de fide*, ed. Paul Verdeyen SJ, CCCM 89A (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 2, 18: 'Omitto etiam quod ibi dicit, quasi ex auctoritate beati Augustini, non esse Deum omnipotentem, scilicet quia non potest nisi ea tantum quae vult: quod brevitatis causa praetermisimus.'

divine omnipotence and the concept of *dignitas* therein almost verbatim in the widely popular *Sententiae*.⁵² However, immediately afterward, Peter Lombard vehemently inveighs against Abelard's notion that God can only do as He does.⁵³ Although he does not mention Abelard by name (*quidam*, 'certain people' is the word used), the Lombard paraphrases Abelard's views on divine omnipotence in the following way: since God cannot do but what His justice requires, and since His justice requires only that which He does, God can only do as He does.⁵⁴ Peter Lombard objects to Abelard, saying that "a verb of requiring" is not properly applied to God.⁵⁵ Although the Lombard rejected Abelard's notion that God can only do as He does, it is clear that Abelard's notion of *dignitas* and the limited applicability of modal verbs to God had its influence.

For later theologians, too, Jerome's passage posed serious difficulties. Peter of Poitiers (c. 1130–1205), a former student of Peter Lombard who taught theology in Paris for numerous years, discusses Jerome's passage in his *Sententiae*, written c. 1170. He quotes Jerome in a chapter on divine omnipotence, and offers the solution of some who say that Jerome intended to place virginity above the state of being married and that, with respect to its aptitude (*habilitas*) and suitability (*idoneitas*) the state of virginity cannot be compared to the state of being married. Peter of Poitiers goes on to offer the simple solution of claiming that Jerome was merely "speaking hyperbolically, trying to commend virginity."⁵⁶ He explains that the phrase "God is not able to", which is to say "God does not wish to", is to be understood as being predicated about His justice, since His justice could not allow the states of virginity and of being married to be placed on the same level. Here again the Ps.-Augustinian notion of God's justice as the extent of His omnipotence finds favour.

We are fortunate to have a series of epistolary exchanges between the monk Peter of Celle (c. 1115–1183) and Nicholas of St Albans debating on the feast of

52 Peter Lombard, *Sententiae*, in *Magistri Petri Lombardi Parisiensis episcopi Sententiae in IV libris distinctae*, ed. I. Brady (Grottaferrata: Editiones Collegii S. Bonaventurae ad Claras Aquas, 1971–1981), 1.42.

53 Ibid., 1.43: 'Invectio contra illos qui dicunt Deum nil posse nisi quod vult et facit.'

54 Ibid., 1.43, c.1: 'Non potest facere, nisi quod iustitia eius exigit; sed non exigit eius iustitia, ut faciat, nisi quod facit: non ergo potest facere, nisi quod facit.'

55 Presumably referring to *TSch*, 3.46 (cited in n. 42).

56 Peter of Poitiers, *Sententiae Petri Pictaviensis*, ed. P. S. Moore and M. DuLong, Publications in Mediaeval Studies 7 (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1943), vol. 1, book 1. Only the first two books have been edited, although the entire work can be found in PL, vol. 211, cols. 783–1280.

the Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, dating to c. 1180–1181.⁵⁷ The debate was prompted by the latter's treatise on the Virgin Mary's immaculate conception, which claimed that Mary had been immune from sin. After responding that to take away the Virgin's struggle against sin is to take away her crowning victory, Peter of Celle turns to the now familiar passage in Jerome:

Concerning the question put forward: "Although God can do all things, He cannot make an unblemished virgin out of a blemished one; He is able to free her from punishment, but He cannot crown a blemished virgin." Would that I understood the force of these words, and grasped Jerome's meaning! Without doubt I would not wickedly hide it from you, nor would I be too greedy to share it with you [...] However, in Jerome's letter the statement is formulated somewhat differently: 'I will speak boldly,' he says, 'although God can do all things, he cannot raise a virgin up after she has fallen,' etc. Therefore we need to consider the subject-matter and the intention of the speaker. The discussion was about the observance of virginity and the avoidance of blemish. So he heard and fashioned his discourse into a fiery praise of virginity [...] And in order that such an excellent and unique benefice would not be disdained, he sets the gravest of conditions to it, so that, in a way, God's ability to restore such a loss is reduced, not with respect to His power but to His dispensation. If one simply regards His power, He is both able to free one from punishment and to give the crown to one who has at one point been blemished, as if to one who is unblemished. But with regard to His dispensation and constitution which is fixed and unchangeable by eternal laws, He cannot do so, since He cannot act against Himself, that is, He cannot nor ought to wish to do so. Even though God is of the simplest nature, yet when we speak about Him, we do so in accordance with our habits of speech, and improperly say that He is able or unable to do something, that He knows or does not know something, that He wishes or does not wish something.⁵⁸

57 Peter of Celle, *The Letters of Peter of Celle*, ed. J. Haseldine (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), Epistulae 157–160, 572–626.

58 Ibid., Epistula 158, 594–596: 'De proposita questione: "Deus cum omnia possit, non potest de corrupta virgine facere incorruptam; valet quidem liberare a pena, sed non valet coronare corruptam," utinam vim intelligerem verbi, et sensum tenerem Hieronymi; procul dubio neque maligne reconderem, neque avaro communicarem [...] In epistola tamen Hieronymi aliter dicitur: "Audenter," inquit, "loquor: cum omnia possit Deus, virginem post ruinam suscitare non potest, etc." Recurrendum proinde est ad materiam locutionis et ad intentionem loquentis. De observanda virginitate et cavenda corruptione tractabatur. Exaudivit ergo et ad preconium virginitatis eloquium suum Hieronymus

Peter of Celle's solution is to claim that Jerome was talking not about God's actual power, but about His dispensation, adding that in conversation we often use words such as 'to wish to' and 'to be able to' imprecisely and indiscriminately. This strategy was the tried-and-true method of Jerome's hagiographer, as quoted by Abelard, who proposed to understand 'God can' as 'God wishes.' Whereas Abelard took the hagiographer's words as a cue to enter into a subtle dialectic discourse that argued that God's will and ability are coextensive, and that, therefore, one implies the other, Peter of Celle makes a rather different, less scholarly point: in the context of human conversation we often use verbs such as 'to wish to' and 'to be able to' indiscriminately, even when we talk about God, and do not take His divine nature into account. This approach is much more pragmatic, and does not attempt to achieve a synthesis between Jerome, his hagiographer, and Scripture. However, Peter of Celle's concern for speaking carefully about the divine nature is reminiscent of Abelard's urgings to be careful when making propositions concerning God.⁵⁹

Lastly, to complete this brief survey of medieval views on divine omnipotence, it should be noted that Thomas Aquinas (c. 1224/5–1274), too, discussed the issue with reference to Jerome's passage. As opposed to earlier theologians, Aquinas has no qualms about declaring it to be impossible for God to remove from a blemished virgin the fact that she has been blemished; although He can remove any blemish of the mind or body, He cannot undo the fact that a blemish has been received.⁶⁰ At the heart of Aquinas's argumentation lies the claim that those things which imply a logical contradiction are not subject to divine omnipotence (such as undoing the past). After thus refuting Peter Damian's position on divine omnipotence, Aquinas turns to the question whether

inflammavit [...] Ut ergo tam egregium et singulare beneficium non negligetur, durissima conditio apponitur, ut quodammodo ad id resarciendum dampnum Deus infirmetur, non de potestate sed de dispensatione. Si enim potentia eius simpliciter attendatur, et a pena valet liberare et que fuerit aliquando corrupta tanquam incorruptam coronare. Si ad dispensationem et constitutionem eternis legibus fixam et invariabilem, non valet quia nihil contra se ipsum valet, id est velle potest vel debet. Cum enim simplicissime sit nature Deus de ipso tamen secundum usus nostre locutionis improprie loquimur dicendo eum aliquid posse vel non posse, aliquid nosse vel non nosse, aliquid velle vel nolle.'

59 It is noteworthy that Peter of Celle uses technical vocabulary borrowed from school context that was used in the so-called *accessus ad auctores* ('introductions to the authors') to summarize an author's 'subject-matter' (*materia*) and 'intention' (*intentio*), indicating that he applies common exegetical techniques used for basic school texts when interpreting Jerome's remark.

60 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Editio Leonina (Taurini: Marietti, 1932), 1, 25.4.

God can only do as He does. He paraphrases Abelard's position (though not mentioned by name) in the following way: "divine power is determined toward the current course of things because of the arrangement of divine wisdom and justice, without which God does nothing."⁶¹ Although Aquinas had, in his refutation of Peter Damian, propounded the idea that what is logically inconsistent is not subject to divine omnipotence, here he is careful to distance himself from Abelard's deterministic notion of God, claiming that God does nothing out of necessity but out of His own free will.

When discussing Abelard's claim that God can only do as is befitting and just, Aquinas brings grammar into the matter: if the words 'befitting' and 'just' are joined directly with the verb 'is', then the meaning is restricted to the present, giving the false statement that God can only do what is now befitting and just; however, if the words 'befitting' and 'just' are joined directly with the verb 'can', whose meaning extends into the future, then the present tense (in the phrase 'as is befitting and just') is signified in an unspecified and general way. The sentence would then be true if taken in the following way: God cannot do anything except that which, if He were to do it, would be befitting and just.

With Aquinas the discussion has altered significantly from the eleventh and twelfth century: both Peter Damian and Abelard's ideas are viewed as *passé* by Aquinas, although he does introduce the kind of grammatical discussion that was first introduced by Abelard. With Aquinas, however, the grammatical discussion is limited to the temporal validity of the statement in question, whereas Abelard made subtle distinctions concerning the validity of modal verbs when the subject of the verb is creation or the Creator. More importantly, however, Aquinas appears to have adopted Abelard's interpretation of Jerome's passage, who understood Jerome to mean that God cannot do that which is contradictory to reason—Aquinas, however, was careful not to use the verb 'to be able to', but instead to claim that what is logically inconsistent is not subject to God's omnipotence, which itself veers close to Abelard's notion that "it does not befit God to do that which lacks all reason."⁶²

As is clear from the careful and circumventing exegetical strategies used by later theologians to interpret Jerome's controversial remark, many medieval theologians would have been more shocked at Peter Damian's open questioning of Jerome's authority than at Desiderius's simple and rather conservative explanation. Indeed, Damian himself records Desiderius as protesting that

61 Ibid., I, 25.5: 'Alii vero dixerunt quod potentia divina determinatur ad hunc cursum rerum propter ordinem sapientiae et iustitiae divinae, sine quo Deus nihil operatur.'

62 *TSch*, 45.

Jerome's remark is "fixed and has authority,"⁶³ and Bernold of Constance, a contemporary of Peter Damian, while commenting on the same passage of Jerome's letter, equates contradicting Jerome with subverting apostolic authority, as the former had received papal approval.⁶⁴ Furthermore, the care with which Damian uses subtle and somewhat misleading syllogisms (whether intended, or not) and other dialectic methods to disprove Desiderius's explanation, as well as his constant and virtuoso use of rhetoric to portray dialecticians applying their field to the Scriptures as specious sophists, greatly undercuts his oft-proclaimed opposition to the application of the liberal arts to the study of the Scriptures. Indeed, comparing Abelard's discussion of divine omnipotence with that of Damian, it is remarkable how little use of rhetoric is to be found in the former's rather dry discourse. If Peter Damian was indeed railing against a type of dialectic theology that was more aimed at rhetorical virtuosity than anything else, he could not have found fault on this account with later scholastic theology.

Concluding Remarks

What light does the comparison between Peter Damian and Peter Abelard on divine omnipotence shed on the latter's use of the liberal arts? Both Peter Damian and Peter Abelard see a place for the liberal arts in 'theology'; the former described them as handmaidens in the service of the sacred Scriptures,⁶⁵

63 Peter Damian, Epistula 119, 343: 'Tu autem e contrario respondisti ratum esse quod dictum est, et satis autenticum, deum videlicet non posse suscitare virginem post ruinam.'

64 Bernold of Constance, *Libellus XV: De statutis ecclesiasticis sobrie legendis*, 3 vols., ed. F. Thaner, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Libelli de lite imperatorum et pontificum (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1892), vol. 2, 158: 'De virgine autem sacra a proposito lapsa, quae in gradum virginittatis non putatur revocanda, non est nimis contendendum, ne ipsa hac contentione contra beatum Ieronimum venire videamur, qui dicit Deum virginem non posse post lapsum reparare. Nam scripta sancti Ieronimi a beato Gelasio in Romana synodo ex apostolica auctoritate adeo canonizata sunt, ut quicumque illis pertinaciter contradicere conatur, etiam apostolicae auctoritati contraire non dubitetur.' For a discussion of this passage, see Resnick, *Divine Power*, 47.

65 Peter Damian, Epistula 119, 354: 'Haec plane, quae ex dialecticorum vel rhetorum prodeunt argumentis, non facile divinae virtutis sunt aptanda mysteriis, et quae ad hoc inventa sunt, ut in sillogismorum instrumenta proficiant vel clausulas dictionum, absit, ut sacris se legibus pertinaciter inferant et divinae virtuti conclusionis suae necessitates opponant. Quae tamen artis humanae peritia, si quando tractandis sacris eloquiis adhibetur, non debet ius magisterii sibimet arroganter arripere, sed velut ancilla dominae quodam

whereas the latter considered them fit to be used to acquire an understanding of the Scriptures. However, although Peter Damian thought that they could be useful tools, they were ultimately not capable of penetrating the divine mysteries, which, he prescribed, should be treated with reverence. Peter Abelard, on the other hand, adopted an explanation of divine omnipotence that equates God's ability with His will, which is found both in Augustine's *Enchiridion* and in *De spiritu et littera* as well as in the anonymous life of Jerome. He uses the art of grammar in discussing the nature and validity of various modal verbs such as 'to be able to' and 'to wish to' when they are applied to God, and uses the art of dialectic in achieving a synthesis between Jerome's remark, his hagiographer's interpretation, and Scripture.

Viewing God as a being governed by *ratio* ('reason') and all of whose actions are intrinsically *rationabilis* ('reasonable'), Abelard veers close to a more deterministic conception of the divinity that caused later scholastic theologians such as Peter Lombard and Thomas Aquinas to vigorously oppose certain aspects of Abelard's argument. At the same time, Abelard's focus on a universal *ratio* gives him a theoretical foundation to justify his use of the liberal arts in the realm of what he himself would coin as 'theology'. Rather similar to Augustine's early intellectual optimism as expressed in *De ordine*,⁶⁶ Abelard conceives of a coherent intellectualism that is in the service of theology, of a universe in which an all-powerful but rational God imposes order on creation, and through the order and rationalism of the liberal arts it is possible to acquire genuine knowledge about the Creator.

Both Peter Damian and Peter Abelard played key roles in shaping future theological debates on the question of divine omnipotence and the methods used therein. In analysing both of these intellectuals, it may be concluded that Peter Damian was not as conservative as he would have his readers believe, and that, although their views on divine omnipotence were at variance, Peter Damian and Abelard's methods were not quite so different. Rather, they are both part of a broader intellectual movement that saw new ways of applying

famulatus obsequio subservire, ne si praecedit, oberret, et dum exteriorum verborum sequitur consequentias, intimae virtutis lumen et rectum veritatis tramitem perdat.'

66 See Augustine, *De ordine*, esp. 1.24. Cf. Augustine, *Retractationes*, ed. P. Knöll, CSEL 36 (Vienna and Leipzig: 1902), 1.3.2–1.3.5 for a critical reevaluation of his earlier views on the liberal arts and their divine nature: 'Verum et in his libris displicet mihi [...] quod multum tribui liberalibus disciplinis quas multi sancti multum nesciunt, quidam etiam sciunt et sancti non sunt.' Cf. G. L. Ellspermann, "The Attitude of the Early Christian Latin Writers Toward Pagan Literature and Learning," PhD diss. (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1949), 185–188.

the liberal arts to the study of Scripture and to the practice of theology, which ultimately would be labelled as 'Scholasticism'. For Peter Damian, a fruitful new avenue of research may well be a study that considers Peter Damian as part of a broader movement of pre-scholastic intellectuals like Lanfranc and Anselm of Canterbury (or for that matter, the lesser known Anselm of Besate), all of whom received training in dialectic at Parma.

As for Abelard, in many ways his methods and approaches to the matter of divine omnipotence are typical of his entire oeuvre: whether it was his position on the universals, exegesis, ethics, theology, or even his hymns, Abelard found new ways of approaching existing problems and of interpreting Scriptural and Patristic authority, not afraid to go against the grain of the *communis opinio* and to come up with innovative solutions that put him at the cutting edge of twelfth-century intellectualism.

Conflict and Correspondence. Inner and Outer in Abelard and Hugh of Saint Victor

Ineke van 't Spijker

Peter Abelard is well known for his place in twelfth-century philosophy and theology. He is also associated with a re-emergence of an emphasis on inwardness in the twelfth century. In the work of Hugh of Saint Victor (d. 1141) we also find a strong emphasis on the 'inner man'. Though for different reasons, both Abelard and Hugh figure in the history of the twelfth-century's turn towards an emphasis on inwardness. Notions of inwardness are found elsewhere in Western history, for example in the Psalms and the Letters of Paul in the Bible, as well as in Greek philosophy, and up to the modern day. Inwardness, however, can mean different things at different times and to different interpreters. The modern emphasis is very much on the private aspects of inwardness. Stephen Toulmin sums them up as: "The personal, the private, the unspoken, the secret, the thought uttered only to oneself, the wish unacknowledged in the breast, the image in the mind's eye."¹

These aspects were not lacking in the twelfth century, yet were not what most characterized inwardness. What resonates in medieval notions is Paul's 'inner man', as it came to be seen as the site of the *imago Dei*. This image may be lost but man can, and must, strive to recover it. Also important are the ways in which in the Bible (as in other ancient literature) there are expressions involving heart and other body parts which are placed metaphorically for the inner.² To get some purchase on this somewhat elusive notion, in this article I shall examine how both Abelard and Hugh consider the relation between inner and outer. Inner indeed implies the outer, and how the relation between the two

1 Stephen Toulmin, "The Inwardness of Mental Life," *Critical Inquiry* 6 (Autumn 1979), 1–16, here 3. I would like to thank Michael Clanchy and Paul Strohm for reading this article and making some helpful suggestions.

2 See Romans 7,22; 2 Corinthians 4,16; Ephesians 3,16. On the *imago Dei* see Robert Javelet, *Image et ressemblance au douzième siècle de saint Anselme à Alain de Lille*, 2 vols. (Paris: Letouzey & Ané, 1967). For metaphors of the inner in Greek literature see Ruth Padel, *In and Out of the Mind: Greek Images of the Tragic Self* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992). See also the introduction of Ineke van 't Spijker, *Fictions of the Inner Life: Religious Literature and Formation of the Self in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 1–17.

is seen, may clarify what is meant by inner.³ In the twelfth century, inner and outer are opposites that sometimes, though perhaps only partially, overlap with others pairs such as the visible and the invisible, or the corporeal and the spiritual.⁴ By analysing how the relation between inner and outer functions in the two writers, perhaps we can bring into focus the differences between them and thus better understand their notions of inwardness. I hope to show that for Hugh inner and outer function within a comprehensive worldview in which their correspondence is ultimately dominant, in the world as a whole as in man, whereas for Abelard they articulate an inevitable tension at the heart of the search for a true moral life.

Although Abelard and Hugh were contemporaries, there is no evidence that they met. There is evidence that Hugh refers to and criticizes the teachings of Abelard sometimes.⁵ David Luscombe has analysed the instances where Hugh and Abelard discuss the same issues, and their different opinions on these matters.⁶ Ralf Stammberger also highlights the topics they both debated.⁷ Dominique Poirel has compared Hugh and Abelard as somewhat different intellectuals, and contrasted Abelard's analytical, dialectical, individual and polemic method with Hugh's more synthetic, erudite, collective and pastoral one.⁸ One of the well-known differences between Abelard and Hugh is in their

3 Cf. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Letzte Schriften über die Philosophie der Psychologie* 2, *Das Innere und das Äussere* / *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology* 2, *The Inner and the Outer*, ed. G. H. von Wright and Heikki Nyman, trans. C. G. Luckhardt and Maximilian A. E. Aue (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 63: "Inneres ist mit Äusserem nicht nur erfahrungsmässig verbunden, sondern auch logisch." Translation: "The inner is tied up with the outer not only empirically, but also logically."

4 See, for example, Constance Brittain Bouchard, *Every Valley Shall Be Exalted: The Discourse of Opposites in Twelfth-Century Thought* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003).

5 But see Dominique Poirel's caution, to see Hugh's attacks as directed to a more general development in theology rather than to Abelard especially, in Dominique Poirel, "Magis propria: La question du langage en théologie chez Hugues de Saint-Victor," in *Arts du langage et théologie aux confins des XI^e–XII^e siècles: Textes, maîtres, débats*, ed. Irène Rosier-Catach, Studia Artistarum, Etudes sur la Faculté des arts dans les Universités médiévales 26 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 393–415, here 394. See also Dominique Poirel, *Livre de nature et débat trinitaire au XII^e siècle: Le De Tribus Diebus de Hugues de Saint-Victor* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 102.

6 Luscombe, *The School of Peter Abelard*, 183–197.

7 Ralf M. W. Stammberger, "De longe ueritas uidetur diuersa iudicia parit': Hugh of Saint Victor and Peter Abelard," *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia* 58 (2002), 65–92.

8 Dominique Poirel, "Deux maîtres, deux méthodes et deux destinées dans la première moitié du XII^e siècle: Pierre Abélard et Hugues de Saint-Victor," in *Les intellectuels dans la cité: Intellectuels, sociabilités et fonctions intellectuelles de l'antiquité à nos jours*. Saint-Aignan,

view of language: Hugh recognizes the inadequacy of our language,⁹ but does not develop a philosophy of language, and criticizes people who ask ‘whether this or that locution is right,’ a criticism that, David Luscombe has said,¹⁰ characterizes pointedly what Abelard was doing: indefatigably analysing what we say, and criticizing people who say things which they do not understand. Luscombe writes about Hugh that “the *lector sacer* is not easily separable from the exegete and the *homo interior*.”¹¹

In Hugh, there is indeed a strong sense of ‘inwardness’ and its relation to the outside. Hugh often elaborates on their complex relation within the context of the project of self-fashioning which he presents to his reader again and again. In his *Didascalicon* Hugh writes that the mind, having forgotten its origin, has become oriented to the outside world, but man can learn again to “know thy self” and “not to seek outside what we can find within.”¹² If this suggests a gap between outer and inner, there is also a strong emphasis on the correspondence and complementary character of the two realms. Hugh explains how we gain knowledge of God, by reason and revelation, by each partly inside, partly

Maison de l'Université, 15–16–17 mai 2006, ed. Emmanuel Soler (forthcoming). I would like to thank Poirel for letting me read this article before publication. See also Poirel, *Livre de nature et débat trinitaire au XII^e siècle*. On the issue of the ternary of *potentia*, *sapientia*, and *benignitas* see also Constant J. Mews, “The World as Text: The Bible and the Book of Nature in Twelfth-Century Theology,” in *Scripture and Pluralism: Reading the Bible in the Religiously Plural Worlds of the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, Studies in the History of Christian Traditions 123, ed. Thomas J. Heffernan and Thomas E. Burman (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2005), 95–122; and Matthias Perkams, “The Origins of the Trinitarian Attributes *Potentia*, *Sapientia*, *Benignitas*,” *Archa Verbi, Yearbook for the Study of Medieval Theology* 1 (2004), 25–41. Whereas Poirel argues for the priority of Hugh in using the three attributes, Mews and Perkams both prefer to stipulate a common source for Abelard and Hugh.

- 9 For example, see Hugh of St Victor, *De sacramentis*, 2.1.11, PL 176:405C: ‘Magna involutio dicendi est circa haec; et laborat homo in suo, qui pene nihil intelligere novit, nisi hoc et secundum hoc quod dicere novit.’ On Hugh’s view of language see Poirel, “*Magis propria*.”
- 10 Luscombe, *The School of Peter Abelard*, 192. See also the comparisons between Hugh and Abelard in Richard Southern, *Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe*, vol. 2: *The Heroic Age* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 57–59.
- 11 Luscombe, *The School of Peter Abelard*, 184.
- 12 Hugh of St Victor, *Didascalicon*, in *Hugonis de Sancto Victore Didascalico: De Studio Legendi*, ed. Charles Henri Buttimer, Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Latin 10 (Washington: Catholic University Press, 1939), 1.1 6, ll. 4–9: ‘animus enim, corporeis passionibus consopitus et per sensibiles formas extra semetipsum abductus, oblitus est quid fuerit [...] reparamur autem per doctrinam, ut nostram agnoscamus naturam, et ut discamus extra non quaerere quod in nobis possumus invenire.’

outside: reason looking into itself as well as observing nature, revelation teaching by inner illumination and in the outer by doctrine and miracles.¹³

For Hugh, the text from Romans 1, 20, "Invisible things have been understood and seen through the things made [by God] (*invisibilia per ea quae facta sunt intellecta conspiciuntur*), functions within his cosmology; within it we proceed from visible things to the invisible, turning inward in the process, as we shall see.¹⁴ In contrast, Abelard uses this text mainly to support his views about the pagans' abilities to come to see the Christian truth about the Trinity,¹⁵ the power, wisdom, and goodness of God reflected in the world which he "made so wonderfully."¹⁶ Hugh explains this process of knowing, which begins in visible things and then may proceed to invisible things:

[...] So that even the outer things would serve the rational soul, there are two instruments of the senses in the human body [the ear and the eye], that through them the notions of visible things would gain entrance into the soul and either bring about in her wisdom or virtue if it was not there at all, or increase it if it were only small. And it happens sometimes that through the sweetness which it draws from the corporeal sense, it returns to the recollection of invisible good things [...], and begins to long for that of which [...] it has perceived, as it were, a shadow and an image in the corporeal affect.¹⁷

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- 13 Hugh of St Victor, *De sacramentis*, 1.3.3, PL 176:217CD: 'Et ratio quidem humana duplici investigatione Deum deprehendit; partim videlicet in se, partim in iis quae erant extra se. Similiter et revelatio divina duplici insinuatione eum qui nesciebatur vel dubie credebatur et non cognitum indicavit, et partim creditum asseruit. Nam humanam ignorantiam nunc intus per aspirationem illuminans edocuit, tunc vero foris vel per doctrinae eruditionem instruxit, vel per miraculorum ostensionem confirmavit.'
 - 14 Hugh quotes the text in the same passage quoted in the previous note in: Ibid., 1.3.3, PL 176:217D–176:218AB; the text is the point of departure in Hugh of St Victor, *De tribus diebus*, ed. Dominique Poirel, CCCM 177, 3, ll. 5–6.
 - 15 See Abelard, *Comm. Rom.* 1 (1. 19–20), ed. by E. M. Buytaert, CCCM 11 (1969b), pp. 67–68, ll. 689–745; *TSB* 1. 30–32, ed. by E. M. Buytaert and C. J. Mews, CCCM 13 (1987), p. 97, ll. 295–310; *TC* 1. 54, ed. by E. M. Buytaert, CCCM 12 (1969a), p. 94, ll. 708–719; 2. 12, pp. 137–138, ll. 195–210; *TSch* 101, by E. M. Buytaert, CCCM 12 (1969a), p. 442, ll. 1220–1230; *TSch* 1. 94; 2. 12, ed. by E. M. Buytaert and C. J. Mews, CCCM 13 (1987), p. 356, ll. 1056–1066; p. 412, ll. 184–200.
 - 16 *TC*, 5.4, ed. Buytaert (1969a), 348, ll. 39–61; *TSch*, 3.4, ed. Buytaert and Mews (1987), 500, ll. 36–58; cf. *Comm. Rom.*, 1.1.20, ed. Buytaert (1969b), 69, ll. 767–776. On this ternary see also above, n. 8.
 - 17 Hugh of St Victor, *Homiliae in Ecclesiasten*, 2, PL 175:141CD: 'Ut igitur ob beatitudinem rationali animae etiam exteriora servirent, posita sunt in corpore humano haec duo

The correspondence between the inner and the world of the senses works also, perhaps even more importantly, the other way, as Hugh explains in his *Commentary on the Celestial Hierarchy*:

For according to the invisible light inborn in itself, our mind, looking at the invisible, easily judges that visible forms, which by some kind likeness correspond to that which it has invisibly inside itself, are images of invisible beauty. [...] And in this way our mind learns from its own nature that the visible has a relation and a likeness to the invisible [...]. Here it is the outer appearance and form which delights the sight; it is the pleasantness of the melody which caresses the hearing; it is the sweetness of odour which refreshes smelling; it is the sweetness of flavour which imparts itself to taste; it is the smoothness of bodies which fondles and soothingly welcomes touch. There, however, the outer appearance is virtue, and the form justice, sweetness is love, and odour desire; song really is joy and exultation; touching is the finding of the beloved good that is desired and sought.¹⁸

This is reminiscent of Augustine's discussion of the senses for example in the *Confessions*.¹⁹ Hugh's inner, however, is much more than in Augustine corresponding with the outer, rather than the outer being mostly a distraction, although the tension between the outside world as sign and as distraction is present in Hugh's work as well.²⁰

instrumenta sensuum, ut per ea ad animam notiones visibilium ingrederentur atque in ipsa sapientiam sive virtutem, vel si omnino non esset, efficerent, vel si minus esset augerent. [...] Et fit nonnumquam, ut per eam quam sensu corporeo trahit dulcedinem, redeat ad invisibilium bonorum recordationem et [...] illud incipiat concupiscere: cujus quasi umbram et imaginem in affectu corporali se sentit percipisse.'

18 Hugh of St Victor, *Commentaria in Hierarchiam coelestem*, 2, PL 175:949D–950B: 'Nam secundum invisibilem lucem insitam sibi noster animus ad invisibilia respiciens, facile arbitratur visibiles formas invisibilis pulchritudinis imagines esse [...] Atque in hunc modum noster animus ex propria natura docetur quod visibilia ad invisibilia cognationem habent et similitudinem [...]. Est enim hic species et forma, quae delectat visum; est et melodiae jucunditas, quae demulcet auditum; est suavitas odoris, quae reficit olfactum; est dulcedo saporis, quae infundit gustum; et lenitas corporum, quae fovet et blande excipit tactum. Illic autem species est virtus, et forma justitia, dulcedo amor, et odor desiderium; cantus vero gaudium et exultatio; contactus autem amati, et desiderati, et quaesiti boni inventio.'

19 See Augustine, *Confessiones libri XIII*, ed. L. Verheijen, CCSL 27, 10.6.8, 158–159, ll. 1–19.

20 On this tension see Dominique Poirel, 'Lire l'univers visible: Le sens d'une métaphore chez Hugues de Saint-Victor,' in *Lire le monde au Moyen Âge: Signe, symbole et corporéité*, Actes

The correspondence between inner and outer is also at the heart of Hugh's pedagogical treatise *De institutione novitiorum*. By fashioning one's outer behaviour, the corresponding inner attitudes will follow, and the other way around: "Just as from the inconstancy of the mind inordinate motion is born, from ordering one's motions the mind will be strengthened to constancy."²¹ This correspondence between inner and outer is already a mark of life in Paradise. As Hugh explains this life, working the land in Paradise was meant to be an indication of how man should cultivate the inner man.²²

The outside world affects the inner man, and it is of course important to be aware of this and direct one's resulting *affectus* in the right way. Thought and feeling, *cogitatio* and *affectus*, influence and generate each other. In this context Hugh says: "where your delight is, there is your thinking (*cogitatio*); where your thinking is, there is your inner man."²³ To fashion this inner man, which is Hugh's project, he proposes building a kind of 'inner ark', filling one's thoughts with the facts of salvation history, as presented in Scripture. According to Hugh, although no object of thought is in itself evil (and becomes only evil if man's desire attaches itself to an object that does not deserve this) it is safer to think of things which are edifying.²⁴

Hugh's language of the inner often has strong architectural elements, just as his language, or his style, is in general one of two- or more often threefold structures, as we saw for example in his discussion of knowledge of God, by reason and revelation: he makes not so much logical distinctions, which is

du colloque des 8 et 9 janvier 2009, Institut Catholique de Paris, Faculté de Philosophie, *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 95 (2011), 363–382.

- 21 Hugh of St Victor, *De institutione novitiorum*, in *L'Oeuvre de Hugues de Saint-Victor I. De institutione novitiorum. De virtute orandi. De laude caritatis. De arrha animae*, ed. H. B. Feiss and P. Sicard, French trans. D. Poirel, H. Rochais and P. Sicard, introduction, notes, and appendices by D. Poirel (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), 18–114, here 48: 'Sicut enim de inconstantia mentis nascitur inordinata motio corporis, ita quoque, dum corpus per disciplinam stringitur, animus ad constantiam solidatur.' On Hugh's teaching see also C. Stephen Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels: Cathedral Schools and Social Ideals in Medieval Europe, 950–1200* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 244–268.
- 22 Hugh of St Victor, *De sacramentis*, 1.6.21, PL 176:276D: 'Sic namque exterior homo exercendus erat, ut [...] in eo quod foris faceret, agnosceret quid sibi intus faciendum erat.'
- 23 Hugh of St Victor, *De archa Noe*, ed. Patricius Sicard, CCCM 176, 4.8, 105, ll. 13–15: 'Vbi est delectatio tua, ibi est et cogitatio tua. Vbi uero est cogitatio, ibi est interioris hominis habitatio.' On Hugh's thought about the affections see Ineke van 't Spijker, "Ad commovendos affectus: Exegesis and the Affects in Hugh of Saint Victor," in *Bibel und Exegese in der Abtei Saint-Victor zu Paris: Form und Funktion eines Grundtextes im europäischen Rahmen*, ed. Rainer Berndt, Corpus Victorinum, Instrumenta 3 (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2009), 215–234.
- 24 Hugh of St Victor, *De archa Noe*, 4.8, CCCM 176, 109–110, ll. 126–159.

what Abelard does, as we shall see shortly, but rather uses building blocks that can be taken apart and put again together. Thus, in his *On the power of prayer* (*De virtute orandi*), he distinguishes three sorts of prayer: supplication (*supplicatio*), postulation (*postulatio*), and insinuation (*insinuatio*), which are then further divided. In supplication, for example, one can distinguish reaching after (*captatio*), requisition (*exactio*) and pure prayer (*oratio pura*). In the context of the latter, Hugh explains, feeling has this property, that the greater and more fervent it is inside, the less it can be explained outside by the voice. This is, he argues, grammatically expressed by using only a noun, such as “my mercy, my refuge, my God” (*misericordia mea, refugium meum, Deus meus*).²⁵ There is a gap here, between words and what they can explain, but in their very imperfection of *signification*, they are a more adequate *expression* of, in this case, the abundance of love and devotion within.

Turning now to Abelard, the first thing that strikes one is that there is no such correspondence between inner and outer, as there is in Hugh. Abelard is famous for notions associated with interiority such as *conscientia* and *intentio*.²⁶ These notions evoke their outward contraries: for conscience it is *fama*, that is one's reputation in the outside world, or its negative counterpart vainglory; intention is often contrasted with outer works. Eileen Sweeney has argued that it is precisely the gap between surface and depth which characterizes Abelard's thought, and this becomes clear when we look closer at his views on the inner and outer.²⁷

Occasionally Abelard acknowledges the function of the outer to indicate an inner state. In his letters, for instance, Abelard explains the blackness of Heloise's outer habit as indicating her bodily affliction.²⁸ Just as Hugh, in

25 Hugh of St Victor, *De virtute orandi*, 7 in *L'Oeuvre de Hugues de Saint-Victor I. De institutione novitiorum. De virtute orandi. De laude caritatis. De arrha animae*, ed. H. B. Feiss and P. Sicard, French trans. D. Poirel, H. Rochais and P. Sicard, introduction, notes, and appendices by D. Poirel (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), 126–171, here 134–138, ll. 117–176.

26 See for the place of conscience and intention in Abelard's ethics Marenbon, *The Philosophy*. See also for their role in Abelard's life Michael T. Clanchy, *Abelard: A Medieval Life* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997).

27 Sweeney, *Boethius, Abelard, and Alan of Lille*, 114. For the contradictions in Abelard's life see also Clanchy, *Abelard*.

28 *Ep.*, 4, available in J. T. Muckle, ed., “The Personal Letters between Abelard and Heloise,” *Mediaeval Studies* 15 (1953), 47–94, here 83–85. See also Ineke van 't Spijker, “Partners in Profession: Inwardness, Experience, and Understanding in Heloise and Abelard,” in *Women and Experience in Later Medieval Writing: Reading the Book of Life*, ed. Anneke

his *Institutio Novitiorum*, pointed to outer behaviour betraying inner unrest, Abelard comments on the ‘disordered’ (*incompositos*) of Romans 1, 31 (Vulgate), as referring to “outer behaviour which is the messenger of a badly ordered mind.”²⁹ But where Hugh continues to use it as the starting-point for an inner change—to achieve a congruity between inner and outer—there is no such counsel in Abelard. In his *Collationes*, it is perhaps the Jewish interlocutor whose position on the correspondence between inner and outer circumcision is reminiscent of Hugh’s.³⁰ The Christian and the Philosopher go on to discuss the role of intention as what defines good and evil.³¹ Conscience and intention almost immediately imply the danger of a contrast with reputation (*fama*), and outer works. Not only can they not remain isolated from their outward manifestations, indeed they often point to a tension with these outer manifestations.

It is well known that Abelard, and with him Heloise, emphasise the priority of the inner intention, over the outer works; and the indifference of what is outer. As Abelard says in the Rule for women that he wrote for Heloise and her community at the Paraclet: “We [...] who desire that Christ lives in our inner man, through faith, take for little external things, which are common to the reprobate and the chosen.”³² What really matters is not what one does but in what spirit, *quo animo* one does it.³³ One’s intention, moreover, should be ruled by love or affection, *caritas*. This *caritas* is, in its turn, as Matthias Perkams has persuasively shown, informed by and informing reason, by an understanding of what is to be loved, conforming itself to the highest good, which is also

Mulder-Bakker and Liz Herbert McAvoy (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 47–64, here 51.

29 *Comm. Rom.*, 1.1.31.11, ed. Buytaert (1969b), 74, ll. 939–940: ‘[...] INCOMPOSITOS, quantum ad exteriorem habitum qui male ordinatae mentis nuntius est [...]’

30 *Coll.*, 34, 42.

31 *Ibid.*, 116, 130–132; 205, 206; 211–212, 210.

32 *Ep.*, 8, available in T. P. McLaughlin, ed., “Abelard’s Rule for Religious Women,” *Mediaeval Studies* 18 (1956), 241–292, here 275–276: ‘Nos uero Christum in interiori homine per fidem habitare cupientes pro modico ducimus exteriora quae tam reprobis quam electis sunt communia.’

33 See, for example, *Sc.*, 1.17., ed. Ilgner (2001), 18, ll. 471–472: ‘Non enim, quae fiunt, set quo animo fiant, pensanda sunt, nec in opere, set in intencione meritum operantis uel laus consistit.’ God attends to this aspect of *quo animo* in *ibid.*, 1.25, 26, ll. 685–686. Abelard quotes Augustine, *De sermone Domini*, ed. A. Mutzenbecher, CCSL 35, 2.13.46, 137, ll. 1004–1005.

what God wills.³⁴ Put firmly, *caritas* is what distinguishes Christians from sinners.³⁵ *Caritas* is also associated with a biblical hermeneutics, in which Jew and Christian, letter and spirit, work and faith, Old Testament Law and New Testament Gospel, fear and love, are contrasted in parallel to outer and inner.³⁶

In his sermons Abelard explains, in words taken from the Old Testament, the clarity of the New Testament. He comments, in *Sermo* 21, on the prophet Amos 9, 6: Who calls the waters of the sea, and pours them out upon the face of the earth / *Qui uocat aquas maris, et effundet eas super faciem terrae*) as follows:

The Lord thus calls the waters of the sea, when he directs the words of apostolic preaching in every sort of language and throughout the whole world. And he pours them not only on the earth, but on the face of the earth, when they do not only sound outwardly, but even, being understood, illuminate the mind inwardly. By 'face', indeed, by which each person is known, knowledge is, not unfittingly, denoted. Words thus are poured over the earth, but do not reach the face, when the figures of the law or the prophecies have a veil in the letter, not their opening in the evangelical understanding or in apostolic teaching, because not so it is said in mystical words: it is poured over the face of the earth, when what is brought forward is known with understanding.³⁷

34 Perkams has examined the central role of *caritas* in Abelard's work: see Perkams, *Liebe als Zentralbegriff*. See also Matthias Perkams, "Intention et charité: Essai d'une vue d'ensemble sur l'éthique d'Abélard," in *Pierre Abélard: Colloque international de Nantes*, ed. Jean Jolivet and Henri Habrias (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2003), 357–376. See also Marenbon, *The Philosophy*, esp. 298–303.

35 *Comm. Rom.*, 3.7.6.11, ed. Buytaert (1969b), 195, ll. 285–286: 'Quisquis ergo caritate Deo cohaeret, qua uidelicet sola discernuntur filii Dei a filiis diaboli [...]': Also in Peter Abelard, *Sermones* [*Serm.*], 1–33 available in Migne, ed. (1878), vol. 178, here *Serm.*, 17, PL 178:502C: 'Charitatem quippe, quae post fidem et spem perfectum efficit, et sola filios Dei a filiis diaboli discernit, haec dies apostolis contulit [...]'. Cf. also *Ep.*, 5, available in J. T. Muckle, ed., "The Letter of Heloise on Religious Life and Abelard's First Reply," *Mediaeval Studies* 17 (1955), 240–281, here 248: 'Nihil quippe inter Iudaeos et Christianos ita separat sicut exteriorum operum et interiorum discretio, praesertim cum inter filios Dei et diaboli sola caritas discernat quam plenitudinem legis et finem praecepti Apostolus vocat.'

36 See van 't Spijker, "Partners in Profession," 55–57.

37 *Serm.*, 21, PL 178:521CD: 'Vocat itaque Dominus aquas maris, dum apostolicae praedicationis verba in omni genere linguarum, et per universum mundum dirigit. Et haec non solum super terram, verum etiam super faciem terrae fudit, dum non solum exterius sonant, verum etiam intellecta mentem intus illuminant. Per faciem quippe, qua unusquisque cognoscitur, non incongrue notitia designatur. Super terram itaque verba fiunt, sed usque ad faciem non pervenerunt, cum aenigmata legis uel prophetiarum

Such understanding, in Abelard's view, is contrasted with the literal explanation of the Jews. In *Sermo* 5 Abelard, commenting on the Letter to the Galatians 4, 3, "While we were minors, we were enslaved to the elemental spirits of the world" (*Cum essemus parvuli, sub elementis mundi eramus servientes*), explains how the examples of the law, given to an ignorant people, can be compared to the letters with which children first learn to write, but which do not mean anything in themselves. Content with the letter that kills, the Jews serve out of fear for punishment, they are not led by love, as sons.³⁸

In his *Ethica*, or *Scito te ipsum*, Abelard counters those who say that it is better, because it is more difficult, to avoid venial than criminal sins:

Otherwise they would have more merit with God, who have carried the heavy yoke of the law rather than served under the liberty of the gospel, because *fear has to do with punishment* and *perfect love casts out fear* (1 John 4, 18), and whoever acts by fear, labours more in work than those whom charity makes willing.³⁹

Abelard acknowledges here that one can make the transition from fear to love, but this is parallel to the transition from "the servitude of the law [...] to the liberty of the gospel, in other words, from external obedience to inner love."⁴⁰

Let us return to Hugh again. He also discussed fear and love as the two "movements of the heart" by which man is impelled to do whatever he does. As he often does, Hugh structures his discussion by dividing and subdividing, distinguishing two good and two bad forms of fear. Whereas servile fear (*timor servilis*) seeks to please men and avoid punishment while keeping an evil will,

velamen habent in littera, non apertionem in intelligentia evangelica uel apostolica doctrina, quia non ita mysticis referta est verbis: super terrae faciem effunditur, dum quae proferuntur, intellecta cognoscuntur.'

38 Ibid., 5, PL 178:418AB: 'Bene etiam documenta legis rudi populo data litteris comparantur potius quam dictionibus, vel orationibus. Litterae quippe carent significatione [...] [Judaei] enim solo litterae sensu contenti sunt [...] Sub elementis istis serviunt qui timore poenarum in lege constitutarum [...] ad obedientiam coguntur ut servi, non amore ducuntur ut filii.'

39 Sc., 48, ed. Ilgner (2001), 47, ll. 1235–1240: 'Alioquin maioris meriti apud deum essent, qui graue iugum legis portauerunt quam qui euangelica libertate deseruiunt, quia *timor penam habet et perfecta caritas foras mittit timorem* (1 John 4, 18), et quicumque timore aguntur, plus in opere laborant quam quos caritas spontaneos facit.'

40 Ibid., 48, 47–48, ll. 1240–1244: '[...] ut uidelicet de seruitute legis, qua premebantur, ad libertatem transeant euangelii [...]'. Perkams, *Liebe als Zentralbegriff*, 127, n. 545 mentions other places where fear and love are contrasted.

worldly fear (*timor mundanus*) fears to displease men and feigns what it is not. The fear of the beginner (*initialis timor*), however, tries to avoid divine punishment but acknowledges that it does not suffice in itself, without the right thought. Charity joins this fear and it then turns into the fear of sons (*timor filialis*), a realisation that fearing God is nothing more than to not wish to lose the good that has been tasted in love. In this life there is always some punishment attached to this fear and we can still go both ways.⁴¹ For Hugh, far from being a contrast to love, this good fear thus functions as a road to *caritas*, although subject to life's changeability.

For Abelard, the contrast between love and fear is often further supported by associating Jews, Law, Letter, works, and fear on the one hand, Christians, Gospel, intention, and love on the other hand. In his *Theologia christiana* Abelard notes how Christians are very close to the philosophers, and

are really to be called philosophers [...] in faith also and hope and by the reasons of our morals and our integrity, according to the liberty of charity, [we] who are called in grace, not according to the servitude of the Jews on the basis of fear of punishment and ambition of earthly things [...].⁴²

Jews are contrasted with Christians in that they pay attention to works rather than to intention: "Jews attend to works more than to intention, while now

41 Hugh of St Victor, *De sacramentis*, 2.13.5, PL 176:528A: 'Servilis timor est, pro evitanda poena abstinere a malo, retenta voluntate mala. Mundanus timor est pro evitanda poena abstinere a bono, retenta voluntate bona. Initialis timor est pro evitanda poena cum perverso opere etiam pravus cogitationes resecare. Filialis timor est bono firmiter adhaerere quia illud amittere nolis.' Ibid., 528CD: '[...] Tunc accedit charitas; et intrat per timorem illum [...] Convertit igitur cor ad Deum [...] Hunc sequitur timor filialis qui ex succedente charitate nascitur, ut ipsum timere nihil aliud sit quam degustatum in charitate bonum jam nolle amittere. Et hic quidem timor aliquid poenae adjunctum habet dum in incerto ambulamus; et potest in utramque adhuc partem declinare status vitae mutabilis.'

42 *TC*, 2.43, 149, ll. 592–600: 'Qui nobis tam rationibus morum quam nomine ipso iunctissimi reperiuntur: [...] fide quoque et spe morumque et honestatis rationibus secundum caritatis libertatem qui in gratia vocati sumus, non secundum servitutem Iudaicam ex timore poenarum et ambitione terrenorum, non ex desiderio aeternorum, nobis plurimum philosophos certum est assentire.' See also *Comm. Rom.*, 1.1.1, ed. Buytaert (1969b), 53, ll. 205–207, contrasting two sorts of servants: 'Ibi enim quasi coactio quaedam ex servili timore, non voluntaria subiectio monstratur, hic per amorem filialis obedientia designatur.'

Christians [...] attend not so much to what is done, but in what mind something is done."⁴³

For Hugh, intention was important as well. In the passage on fear quoted above, the *timor initialis* is that of beginners, trying to escape punishment. For God, who sees the heart, an innocent action is not enough; the thought behind it must be clean. One thing is done, another intended, the good is not loved for its own sake.⁴⁴ Again, in his discussion of penance, Hugh counters an imaginary opponent, who asks why, if the merit is contained in the will, is work required? Hugh says that if one has the *voluntas* to do something good and, although able to do it, one does not do it, one apparently did not have the will. If the work is impeded for some reason, however, the will suffices.⁴⁵ Hugh does not make the fine distinctions that Abelard made between *intentio* and *voluntas*. As John Marenbon argues, what is decisive, in Abelard's thought about sin, is not just a bad will, but the intention to *act*.⁴⁶ In what follows, Hugh refuses to separate *voluntas* and *opus*. The work feeds the will—something with which Abelard may have agreed.⁴⁷ Looking at the use of language, as he often does, Hugh says that "according to something, one can say that only man's will is

43 *Comm. Rom.*, 1.1.17, ed. Buytaert (1969b), 65, ll. 642–645: 'Quae quidem opera Iudaei magis quam intentionem attendebant, cum nunc Christiani naturali suscitata iustitia non tam attendant quae fiunt quam quo animo fiant.' Cf. Abelard's answer to Heloise's question in Peter Abelard, *Problemata Heloisae cum Petri Abaelardi Solutionibus* [*Problemata*], available in J. P. Migne, ed., *Problemata Heloisae cum Petri Abaelardi Solutionibus*, vol. 178 (1878), here *Problemata*, 24, PL 178:710AB: 'Illi [sc. Iudaei] quippe ad opera magis quam ad animum respicientes [...]'

44 Hugh of St Victor, *De sacramentis*, 2.13.5 PL 176:528BC: '[...] quia ei qui cor intuetur non est satis ad probationem si innocens fuerit actio, nisi etiam ipsa cordis cogitatio ante ejus oculos sincera atque impolluta appareat [...] Necdum tamen perfectio est, quia dum aliud agitur, et aliud intenditur, ipsum adhuc propter se bonum non amatur.'

45 Ibid., 2.14.6, PL 176:561B: 'Sed voluntatem sine opere habere non potes, quando operari potes. Non est voluntas si non operatur quod potest. Si autem non potest operari, sufficit ipsa sibi, et habet meritum propter se, in quo sola placet, quod bona est.'

46 Marenbon, *The Philosophy*, 256. Cf. however Perkams, *Liebe als Zentralbegriff*, 175, who questions a too sharp distinction between act and thought. Consent may imply an act of thinking, for example, taking pleasure in an evil thought (which in itself is not sinful).

47 Hugh of St Victor, *De sacramentis*, 2.14.6, PL 176:561C: 'Ita utrinque affectus opere nutritur, ut crescat, et amplior sit; ut vix fieri potest ut voluntas opere suo non augeatur.' For a similar added value of works in Abelard or his followers see his *Sententie*, quoted in István Bejczy, "Deeds Without Value: Exploring a Weak Spot in Abelard's Ethics," *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie médiévales* 70 (2003), 1–21, here 6, n. 20, quoting from Mews, "The Sententie," 183, fragm. 21, now see the ed. by Constant Mews and David Luscombe, CCCM 14.170: '[...] nisi dum operatur fortassis in aliquo eius voluntas augmentetur [...]']

remunerated. But one could also fittingly say that work and will, or man willing and working, is remunerated."⁴⁸ Willing, in short, is always about *something*.⁴⁹ Hugh concludes his discussion with the example of the rich Zacheus and the poor widow, both giving according to their means, and both having the same will (Mattheus 19, 1–10; Marcus 12, 41–44; Lucas 21, 1–4).⁵⁰

In a comparable way Abelard discusses, in his *Ethica*, or *Scito te ipsum*, the case where two people wished to build a house for the poor, but one of them was prevented from doing so, as his money was stolen; surely the merit of both is the same before God.⁵¹ Abelard distinguishes, more strictly than Hugh is prepared to do, outer work and inner intention. This does not mean that he does not pay attention to works at all. Although, as Perkams has noted, he does not fully develop a theory of action, works play a role in his thought, once he has made it clear that they are, from a moral perspective, indifferent in themselves and do not add anything to merit. Much more than Hugh, Abelard distinguishes between what strictly determines morality and what one could call its social implications.⁵² Abelard firmly acknowledges that human justice can only take into account the outer works. He concludes his example about the two men wishing to build a home for the poor by saying that he does not deny that in this life there may be some retribution for good or evil works, so that we have some incentive to act or restrain from acting, and to set an example of what is fitting or not.⁵³

We might speculate that Abelard would perhaps have agreed with Hugh, that one's intention has clearly not been the right one if correspondent action does not follow. Abelard discusses the case of someone who pretends to be penitent, but does not want to give back what he has stolen.⁵⁴ Abelard also acknowledges the way in which actions can indicate the right intention. In

48 Hugh of St Victor, *De sacramentis*, 2.14.6, PL 176:561D: 'Nam secundum aliquid et hoc veraciter dicitur, quod hominis voluntas sive ad bonum sive ad malum, sola remuneratur. Et rursum convenienter dicitur, quod opus et voluntas et ipse etiam homo volens et operans pro voluntate et opere remuneratur.'

49 Ibid., 2.14.6, PL 176:562B: 'Velle enim semper aliquid velle est [...].'

50 Ibid., 2.14.6, PL 176:562C.

51 Sc., I, 32, ed. Ilgner (2001), 32, ll. 824–835.

52 Perkams, *Liebe als Zentralbegriff*, 180–183, 222.

53 Sc., I, 32, ed. Ilgner (2001), 32, ll. 844–849: 'Nec tamen negamus in hac vita bonis istis operibus uel malis aliquid retribui, ut ex presenti retributione in premio uel pena amplius ad bona incitemur uel a malis retrahamur, et de aliis alii exempla sumant in faciendis, quae conuenit, uel cauendis, quae non conuenit.'

54 Ibid., I, 53, 52–53, ll. 1356–1367.

his *Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Romans* Abelard states that even if, on the one hand, man is judged not according to his works, but according to his intention, on the other hand, "not the hearers of the Law, but the doers of the Law will be justified" (Romans 2, 13). Abelard explains that Paul here means by *factores* those who through love of God are freely willing to act, according to which the good will is taken for the outer work.⁵⁵ He continues by saying that those who show outwardly in their works the good will which they have in their mind are the ones who have the law written "in the heart, to which their own conscience bears witness": that is "their conscience and their right intention, known to them and not to others, make them confident about the rightness of their works."⁵⁶ Abelard also sees works, if not as meritorious, as what may mirror or manifest the intention.⁵⁷ Faith, in short, draws to works.⁵⁸ Besides, there is the effect of our works on other people.⁵⁹

However, for Abelard, *intentio* was the decisive element in merit. It also became one of the main instances where the potential gap between inner and outer manifests itself. It is easy to see through the hypocrisy of those who, when they pray, wish to be seen by other people, in the story in Matthew around the Lord's Prayer.⁶⁰ Abelard has other examples where the intention becomes obvious, or can be construed after the event, for example when in Letter 8, his *Rule for Religious Women*, he talks about the election of an abbess. It may be difficult to discern whether somebody is brought to the abbacy because she desires authority, or status and wealth, or service. The outcome

55 *Comm. Rom.*, 1.2.13, ed. Buytaert (1969b), 84, ll. 271–275: 'At uero cum alibi dicat nemini iustificari ex operibus legis, quomodo nunc dicit *factores legis* iustificari nisi hoc loco *factores* dicat qui amore Dei ad faciendum spontanei sunt, secundum quod bona uoluntas pro opere facti reputatur, ut diximus?'

56 *Ibid.*, 1.2.15, 85, ll. 299–301 and 307–309: 'Quippe qui exhibent exterius in opere uoluntatem bonam quam habent in mente, OSTENDVNT OPVS LEGIS SCRIPTVM IN CORDIBVS [...] hoc est securos eos faciente de iustitia operum suorum bona ipsorum conscientia atque recta intentione, quae illis, non aliis, cognita est.' The same text (Romans 2:14–2:15) is quoted in *TC*, 2.19, 141, supporting the possibility of pagan authors being saved.

57 Cf. Perkams, *Liebe als Zentralbegriff*, 155, 166. Intention rightly informed by *caritas* also urges to act.

58 *Comm. Rom.*, 4.10.9, ed. Buytaert (1969b), 251, ll. 91–92: '[...] ut ipsa uidelicet fides eum ad opera trahat [...].'

59 See above, n. 53. Cf. *Comm. Rom.*, 4.14.15, ed. Buytaert (1969b), 304, ll. 248–253; *Ep.*, 8, ed. McLaughlin (1956), 269.

60 *Serm.*, 14, available in Paola De Santis, ed., *I sermoni di Abelardo per le monache del Paraceto* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002), 211.

will show the true nature of her previous behaviour.⁶¹ In such cases the intention is after all quite clear. But elsewhere, and especially in the letter exchange between Abelard and Heloise there is a more troubled concern with intention. Heloise expresses this concern when she complains about the discrepancies between her intention and her praiseworthy behaviour: "Men call me chaste; they do not know the hypocrite I am."⁶² Abelard also points to the possibility that even in her claim of eschewing people's praise Heloise may be deceiving herself, that there may be a discrepancy between what she writes and what she feels.⁶³ Partly this could be seen as the never-ending monastic concern with the possibilities of pride posing as humility, already explored and diagnosed in Cassian. But it is not only that. Many scholars have pointed to Abelard's search for an authentic spiritual life.⁶⁴ Perhaps it would be more precise to say that for Abelard (and for Heloise) authenticity has become a problem, resulting in a persistent anxiety about the potential discrepancy between one's conscience or intention and what is externally manifest. It is not as if others, Hugh of Saint Victor for example, would not have pursued a sincere religious life. Hugh is also aware of the difficulty of knowing one's real intention, which often becomes clear only after one has acted.⁶⁵ However, within his comprehensive worldview the question does not have the same relevance as it has for Abelard. For Abelard, however, it is a constant issue, and there is no obvious way to influence the inner by means of the outer, as there is in Hugh.

Inner intention, by its nature, is hidden from other people, and only open to God, who alone probes the heart and sees in its hiddenness.⁶⁶ In his *Ethica*, or *Scito te ipsum* Abelard points to people who are worried more about the impression they make on others than on what God can see.⁶⁷ The hiddenness

61 *Ep.*, 8, ed. McLaughlin (1956), 256: 'Quod prius exhibebat utrum virtus fuerit an simulatio, indicabit praelatio.' In *Serm.*, 33 there is a discussion on the requirements for a superior with the same warning, see PL 178:599B–599D.

62 *Ep.*, 3, ed. Muckle (1953), 81: 'Castam me praedicant qui non deprehendunt hypocritam.'

63 *Ep.*, 4, ed. Muckle (1953), 87: 'Atque utinam sic sit in animo tuo sicut et in scripto!'

64 See, for example, Sweeney, *Boethius, Abelard and Alan of Lille*, 66; Sweeney, "Abelard's *Historia Calamitatum*." Sweeney takes authenticity here as meaning 'coherence between surface and depth,' 303, 305.

65 Hugh of St Victor, *De institutione novitiorum*, 46, ll. 413–423.

66 *Sc.*, 1.25, 26, ll. 685–687: 'Deus uero solus, qui non tam, quae fiunt, quam, quo animo fiunt, attendit, ueraciter in intencione nostra reatum pensat et uero iudicio culpam examinat.'

67 *Ibid.*, 1.58, ed. Ilgner (2001), 57, ll. 1478–1479: 'Timemus homines offendere et, quorum offensam timore non effugimus, uerecundia uitamus'; cf. *ibid.*, 1.66, 66.

of the inner is reminiscent of a similar concern in Augustine.⁶⁸ However, in Augustine it brings into focus an anxiety about the possibilities and limitations of communication between people,⁶⁹ whereas for Abelard it is a more individual issue, a matter of one's *conscientia*, hidden from others, although not from oneself. Commenting on Romans 8, where Paul contrasts adoptive sons and servants, when he comes to verse 16 ("It is that very spirit bearing witness with our spirit"), Abelard states: "Everyone recognizes nothing better than his own conscience, and whether he is to be called servant or son."⁷⁰

This certainty is undermined when he adds that Paul takes the Romans whom he is addressing, of whom many are to be reprehended, as actually meaning "the general person of the faithful and expounds not how they are, but how they should be."⁷¹ And (even) the purest conscience is ultimately not sufficient. In *Sermo* 8, the apostle,

who excelled in the greatest virtues and whose conscience could not find anything about which to accuse himself, did not at all think himself righteous, as he could err in his judgement of himself.⁷²

Thus, the self-knowledge which Abelard pursues seems a more tormented issue than it is for Hugh, even when the latter warns his reader that one's intention often becomes manifest only with hindsight.

Inner *conscientia*, by which one judges one's intentions, evokes its external counterpart as well, not just in the form of vainglory, which is easy to condemn, but also as one's positive reputation, *fama*. His personal *fama* was important for Abelard in his *Historia calamitatum*, where he quotes Augustine,

68 See, for example, Augustine, *Confessiones*, 10.2.2, 155, ll. 1–3: 'Et tibi quidem, domine, cuius oculis nuda est abyssus humanae conscientiae, quid occultum esset in me, etiamsi nollem confiteri tibi?'

69 Ibid., 7.7.11, 100, ll. 13–17: 'Tu sciebas quid patiebar, et nullus hominum. Quantum enim erat quod inde digerebatur per linguam meam in aures familiarissimorum meorum! Numquid totus tumultus animae meae, cui nec tempora nec os sufficebat, sonabat eis?'

70 *Comm. Rom.*, 3.8.16. ed. Buytaert (1969b), 218, ll. 273–274: 'Nihil enim melius quisque quam propriam recognoscit conscientiam, et utrum seruus an filius potius dicendus sit.'

71 Ibid., 3.8.16, ed. Buytaert (1969b), 218, ll. 274–278: 'Notandum uero Apostolum in his quibus loquitur Romanis, quorum nonnulli uehementer erant reprehendendi, generalem fidelium personam hoc loco se intelligere et non tam quales illi essent quam quales esse deberent exponere.'

72 *Serm.*, 8, PL 178:444A: 'Qui etiam cum maximis praemineret virtutibus, nec quid in se accusaret, conscientia ejus reperiret, nequaquam tamen in hoc se justum esse censuit, qui in iudicio errare potuit.'

saying that *fama* implies a responsibility for others: "He who, trusting his conscience, neglects his reputation, is cruel."⁷³ Abelard pays attention to *fama* also more generally. Their concern with their *fama*, for the sake of others, is the reason why Jesus underwent circumcision and Mary purification—even when there was no need to do so.⁷⁴ *Fama* is to be distinguished from vainglory and ambition. It is rather an awareness of the effect of one's actions on others.⁷⁵ Peter's tears after his betrayal of Christ are not to be attributed, Abelard supposes, to Peter's pride, wishing to avoid open confession, but to his concern for the church, which, he knew, would be entrusted to his leadership and might be scandalized by his weakness.⁷⁶ Here *fama* and *conscientia* at least do not conflict— at the price of a compromise. Often *conscientia* figures as that against which people act, and thus sin.⁷⁷ As Abelard says in *Ethica*, or *Scito te ipsum*: "We fear to offend men and if we don't, we avoid to be seen by them [...] but are not ashamed to be seen by God."⁷⁸

Scholars have pointed to the ambiguities and tensions in Abelard's thinking, and to the ways in which he tries to comprehend these tensions rather than to solve them, in his exploration of the limits of theological language,⁷⁹ in his refusal of easy consolation.⁸⁰ This seems to apply eminently to the tension between inner and outer. In contrast to Abelard, Hugh portrays the relation between inner and outer as a more harmonious one. For Hugh the relation functions within a comprehensive cosmology, in which inner and outer correspond. They did so perfectly before the Fall. However flawed this correspondence may have become after the Fall, it always beckons in the background. For Abelard there is no such comforting background. For Hugh self-knowledge leads to at least a restored awareness of one's origins, and the correspondence

73 HC, 102, ll. 1391–1394: 'Et ut beatus meminit Augustinus [...] "Qui, fidens conscientie sue, negligit famam suam crudelis est."' See Augustine, *Sermo* 355.1, PL 39:1569. Cf. Peter Abelard, *Apologia contra Bernardum* [*Apol.*], 4 ed. E. M. Buytaert, CCCM 11, 361, ll. 44–45: 'Sed quoniam, ut beatus meminit Augustinus, "crudelis est qui famam suam negligit" [...].'

74 *Serm.*, 3, PL 178:405 and 5, PL 178:419.

75 Perkams, *Liebe als Zentralbegriff*, 93, 294.

76 Sc., 1.67, ed. Ilgner (2001), 68, ll. 1769–1771: 'Timor quoque in causa rationabilis fuit de dampno ecclesiae magis quam de proprie detrimento fame.'

77 See, for example, *Comm. Rom.*, 1.2.2. ed. Buytaert (1969b), 77, ll. 19–20: '[...] mala opera quae contra propriam conscientiam committis.'

78 See note 67; cf. *Serm.*, 8, PL 178:441D–178:442A.

79 Jolivet, *Arts du langage*; Frank Bezner, *Vela Veritatis: Hermeneutik, Wissen und Sprache in der Intellectual History des 12. Jahrhunderts*, Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 85 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2005), 99–181.

80 Sweeney, *Boethius, Abelard and Alan of Lille*, 63–125.

between inner and outer.⁸¹ Abelard's *Ethica*, or *Scito te ipsum* rather emphasises the real or potential incongruities between the two.

For Hugh, inner and outer reflect each other, and man is the meeting point between them. By contrast, for Abelard there is no such meeting point. This is perhaps because he has set man apart from the historical and cosmological background which for Hugh is the theatre on which man plays his part. Hugh's writings are not without a certain melancholy—within man's temporal predicament, man's consolations often do not outweigh the trouble in seeking them—but it is the melancholy of the exile who longs for the return to the fatherland.⁸² Abelard quotes Augustine regarding the final, sinless state of man, comparable only to the innocent happiness of man in paradise.⁸³ In Abelard's own work there seem to be no such reminiscences of this pre-lapsarian bliss. Instead, Abelard confronts man with his conscience, and its task to distinguish between intentions.⁸⁴ More acutely than his contemporaries, Abelard has isolated inner intention and inner conscience as the defining components in man's quest for a moral life. Yet, the outside world will always make its demands upon this inner world. And without Hugh's fashioning of the inner through the outer, more often than not a fault line between them remains.

81 See the quotation in n. 12 above.

82 Hugh of St Victor, *Homiliae In Ecclesiasten* 1, PL 175:124D: 'Vidit quanta affectione ac miseria quotidie sine cessatione vita humana atteritur, etiam in iis quae pro sui consolatione operatur, et quemadmodum semper fere plus detrimenti patitur in quaerendo remedio, quam recipiat consolationis in percipiendo fomento.'

83 Peter Abelard, *Expositio in Hexaemeron* [Hex.] 443.15, 443, ed. by Mary Romig and David Luscombe, CCCM 15: 'Ac per hos quoniam post talem mundationem nullum peccatum iustos habituros esse credendum est, profecto illud tempus, quantum attinet ad non habere peccatum, nulli tempori comparandum est, nisi quando primi homines in paradiso ante praeuaricationem innocentissima felicitate uixerunt.' See Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, in CCSL 48, 20.26, 749, ll. 29–43.

84 Perkams, *Liebe als Zentralbegriff*, 61: Abelard's ethics has lost the anchoring in an objective structure of being, which it had in Augustine—and in Hugh of Saint Victor.

PART TWO

Controversy and Exchange



Was Abelard Right to Deny that He Had Written a Book of ‘Sentences’?

Michael T. Clanchy

This little point of detail has wide implications, both for Abelard himself and for understanding scholastic texts in the twelfth century, because it was Bernard of Clairvaux, in the process which led to Abelard’s prosecution for heresy at the council of Sens in 1141, who claimed that his accusations were “to be found partly in a book of sentences of Master Peter.”¹ (Bernard named three books of Abelard’s in this indictment: his *Theologia*, his *Scito te Ipsum* or *Ethica*, and a book of ‘sentences’.) Abelard did not deny authorship of the first two items, as *Theologia* (‘Theology’) and *Scito te Ipsum* (‘Know Thyself’, the famous advice of the Delphic Oracle) were startling titles which he had chosen himself (at least this is certain for *Theologia*).² But he emphatically denied authorship of a book of ‘sentences’. The scholastic use of ‘sententia’ was developing at this time to mean an author’s opinion or meaning, whether he was an ancient Church Father or a modern master. A ‘book of sentences’ (*liber sententiarum*) typically consisted of a collection of extracts or citations from an author’s works coherently arranged by topics.³ Such a book might therefore provide a synopsis or overview of a master’s teaching and this would have been its value to Abelard’s prosecutors. His denial was uncompromising: “I learned this not without the greatest astonishment”, he insisted, “for nowhere may be found any book

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- ¹ ‘Haec capitula, partim in libro *Theologiae*, partim in libro sententiarum magistri Petri, partim in libro cuius titulus est *Scito te ipsum* reperta sunt.’ See Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sancti Bernardi Opera*, vol. 8, Letter 190, 39–40, and Constant J. Mews, “The Lists of Heresies Imputed to Peter Abelard,” *Revue Bénédictine* 95 (1985), 73–110, here 110. As the titles of books are at issue here, it should be noted that the medieval manuscripts do not use initial capital letters for “*Theologiae*” and “*Scito te ipsum*” and neither do they differentiate their script (indicated by italics in print) to show that these are titles of books. (Throughout this article all translations from Latin are my own. I refer to other English translations where appropriate.)
 - ² ‘Illud opus nostrum de sancta Trinitate, prout Dominus concessit a nobis compositum, *Theologiae* intitulaveram nomine.’ See R. Klibansky, ed., “Peter Abailard and Bernard of Clairvaux: A Letter by Abailard,” 6; and Jan M. Ziolkowski, trans., *Letters of Peter Abelard: Beyond the Personal* (Washington, DC, 2008), 106.
 - ³ M. Teeuwen, *The Vocabulary of Intellectual Life in the Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2003), 336–338.

written by me which is called ‘sentences.’”⁴ Some manuscripts of this denial read *numquam* (‘never’), instead of ‘nowhere’ (*nusquam*), which is equally emphatic. This was a public and widespread denial, as it was addressed “to all the sons of Holy Church” and it survives in a number of copies.⁵

Despite this denial, however, there are manuscripts from the twelfth century which describe their contents as ‘sentences’ of Abelard’s. Consequently in a publication in 2006 modern scholarship has dedicated a whole volume of the new edition of Abelard’s collected works to texts of his ‘sentences’, with David Luscombe and Constant Mews as the principal editors, in the *Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis* series.⁶ There is an obvious mismatch or discrepancy here between modern editorial scholarship and the way Abelard acknowledged his own work in the scholastic culture of his time. This is an example of the sorts of tension which we have been asked to address in these essays concerning Abelard as a teacher and writer who was formed by the liberal arts curriculum. At the start of *Historia calamitatum* he explains that his purpose is to exemplify “human feelings” and so he describes his education in the liberal arts in these terms.⁷ He twice uses the word ‘love’ (*amor*) to describe what he felt about his chosen study of ‘letters’: first his father was “embraced by so great a love of letters” that he had all his sons educated in them, and then Abelard himself made such great progress in the study of letters, and was so ardently attached to them, that he “fell so deeply in love with them” that he gave up his birthright as a knight.⁸ Such all empowering love produced adverse reactions in others and so began (in Abelard’s opinion) “my calamities, which persist up to the present day.”⁹

4 ‘Non sine admiratione maxima suscepi, cum nusquam liber aliquis qui sententiarum dicatur a me scriptus repperiatur.’ See *Conf. fid. “Universis,”* ed. Burnett (1986b), 138.

5 *Conf. fid. “Universis,”* ed. Burnett (1986b), 132: ‘Universis Ecclesie Sancte Filiis Petrus Ex Eis Unus Sed In Eis Minimus.’

6 Eligius M. Buytaert and Constant J. Mews, ed., *Petri Abaelardi Opera Theologica I*, CCCM 14 (Turnhout, 1987), vol. 6. Luscombe gives his aforementioned edition the title *Sententie Magistri Petri Abaelardi* and Mews entitles his *Liber Sententiarum Magistri Petri*, CCCM 14 (2006). In addition to Luscombe and Mews, J. Barrow, C. S. F. Burnett, and K. Keats-Rohan are acknowledged as assistant editors on the title page.

7 ‘Sepe humanos affectus aut provocant aut mittigant amplius exempla quam verba.’ See *HC*, 63, available in E. Hicks, ed., *La Vie et les Epistres Pierres Abaelart et Heloys sa Feme* (Paris, 1991), 2.

8 ‘Tanto litteras amore complexus est [...] Ego vero quanto amplius et facilius in studio litterarum profeci tanto ardentius eis inhesi, et in tanto earum amore illectus sum.’ See *HC*, 63, ed. Hicks (1991), 2.

9 ‘Hinc calamitatum mearum, que nunc usque perseverant, ceperunt exordia.’ See *ibid.*, 64, 4.

At the end of Abelard's career, at the time of the council of Sens, it was still the liberal arts curriculum which made him such a controversial figure, as he recognized in his extraordinary admission that "logic has made me hateful to the world."¹⁰ His opponents (he claimed) acknowledged that he was still "absolutely outstanding in logic" and yet they questioned the purity of his Christian faith.¹¹ Abelard has an unusual phrase to describe them, for which a source has not yet been found: his opponents were *perversi pervertentes, quorum sapientia est in perditione*.¹² Charles Burnett, the editor of this text (the *Confession of Faith to Heloise*), translates this as: "the malicious with their crooked thoughts, whose wisdom consists in destroying things."¹³ A more literal translation (by Betty Radice) is: "the perverted who seek to pervert and whose wisdom is only for destruction."¹⁴ The point is that wisdom, as a gift of the Holy Spirit, should lead to salvation whereas here it has got turned upside down by "those who seek to pervert." This description underlines the context of extreme distrust—compounded perhaps by anger and frustration at failing to make himself understood—with which Abelard reacted to Bernard's accusations.

Abelard made a comparable denial, though rather less specifically, in the document known as the *Apologia contra Bernardum* ('the Apologia against Bernard') where he says of the book of 'sentences' and other allegedly erroneous sources that these "writings either cannot be found or were not mine."¹⁵ Such allegations convicted Bernard of being a liar (Abelard argued) without the need on his part to say anything more.¹⁶ Whereas Bernard was

10 'Odiosum me mundo reddidit logica.' See Peter Abelard, *Confessio fidei ad Heloisam* [*Conf. fid. Hel.*], available in Charles H. Burnett, ed., *Confessio fidei ad Heloisam* (1986a), 152.

11 Ibid.: 'Me in logica prestantissimum esse.'

12 Ibid.: 'Perversi pervertentes.'

13 Ibid.

14 B. Radice, trans., *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise* (London, 1974), rev. ed. Michael T. Clanchy (London, 2003), 211. Compare the translation in W. Levitan, trans., *Abelard and Heloise: The Letters and Other Writings* (Indianapolis: 2007), 260: "those twisted men who twist all things and are wise only to destroy." Compare likewise *Ep.*, available in M. M. McLaughlin and B. Wheeler, trans., *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise: A Translation of Their Collected Correspondence and Related Writings* (New York: 2009), 209: "those perverse perverters, for whom wisdom is the way to perdition."

15 'Ubi cum reperiri non possint aut mea scripta non fuerint.' See *Apol.* 361.

16 'Ipsa eum scripta, me quoque reticente, mendacem convincant.' See *Apol.* Ziolkowski includes the "*Apologia Contra Bernardum*," in Ziolkowski, *Letters of Peter Abelard*, 111–129. He translates this passage at 118 as: "the writings prove him wrong without my saying even a word." Abelard's use of *mendax* ('mendacious') is stronger than "prove him wrong," as it means having a malicious intent.

characterized as mendacious, Abelard's stance was one of injured innocence.¹⁷ In the *Apologia against Bernard* he took up some of the various meanings of 'sententia'. By his verbal distortions, Abelard argued, Bernard promulgated "a sentence" against himself.¹⁸ Here 'sententia' is being used in the judicial sense of a punitive decision by a court of law. Abelard also referred to 'sententia' in the sense of 'meaning'. "Perhaps you will say", he chides Bernard, "that I did not write or express these actual words, but I implied the same sense (*sententiam*) in some other words. However, if only you would express my meaning (*sententiam*) and not pervert it in words, then nothing of your slander would be left to discuss."¹⁹ Abelard's use of 'pervert' in this accusation, addressed to Bernard himself, may tie up with his reference to *perversi pervertentes* in the *Confession of Faith to Heloise*.

Although in his struggle with Bernard Abelard was prepared to stake everything on his own reputation for integrity and truthfulness, his denial that he had written a book of 'sentences' was not as forthright as it appeared. What was meant for a start by "any book written by me (*a me scriptus*)?"²⁰ Was Abelard only acknowledging authorship of texts in his own handwriting? Masters of his distinction did not usually write out their works themselves, as they had been trained to dictate them to scribes. Virtually nothing is known about Abelard's methods of work in the scriptorium and, unlike Thomas Aquinas for example, no text exists which is said to be written in his own hand. (Because Abelard was twice accused of heresy, he had no group of followers to preserve his writings; indeed by 1141 the pope had ordered his books to be burned wherever they might be found.)²¹ It might also have been the case that no autograph text of Abelard's 'sentences' existed because the book had been such a success; the manuscript might have been copied and recopied by students, perhaps without his permission or knowledge. He describes in *Historia calamitatum* how at

17 'Ne innocentiam meam, quam a culpa veritas liberat, infamie nevo respergendo delinquat.' See *Conf. fid. "Universis,"* 138.

18 'Dum scripta mea cum auctore suo damnasce iactitas, in te potius et tua pervulgas sententiam.' See *Apol.* 361 and Ziolkowski, *Letters of Peter Abelard*, 120.

19 'At fortassis inquires non haec quidem verba me scripsisse sive protulisse, sed sententiam eamdem licet aliis verbis insinuisse. Atque utinam ita sententiam meam exprimeres, ut eam verbis non perverteres, ut tunc nihil calumniae tuae in discursum relinqueretur.' See *Apol.* 362 and Ziolkowski, *Letters of Peter Abelard*, 120.

20 See n. 4 above.

21 In a letter to the archbishops of Sens and Reims and Bernard of Clairvaux concerning Abelard and Arnold of Brescia, Innocent II wrote: 'libros erroris eorum, ubicumque reperti fuerint, igne comburi.' See Innocent II, "Les Lettres de Guillaume de Saint-Thierry à saint Bernard," ed. J. Leclercq, *Revue Bénédictine* 79 (1969), 375–391, here 379.

his trial for heresy at Soissons in 1121 his opponents accused him of "allowing many people to transcribe" his book. The most extraordinary case of Abelard's teachings being copied out and taken elsewhere are the citations to be found in a manuscript of the Rule of St Benedict in Old English.²² These citations mainly concern the meaning of sin and arguments associated with Abelard's *Ethics*. Why they were copied piecemeal into a Rule of St Benedict is inexplicable, as they do not seem relevant to the Rule in any way.

There was also potential for ambiguity in Abelard's use of *dicatur* to describe the book of 'sentences': *liber aliquis qui sententiarum dicatur* ("any book which is called 'sentences'"). The verb *dicatur* is in the subjunctive and it could therefore mean 'may be called', which introduces an element of doubt into the title of the book. Bernard used the same verb *dicere* to suggest doubt or indifference about the exact title of this book. In a letter to the bishop and cardinals of the Roman curia he urged them to read Abelard's *Theologia* and likewise "read another book which they call his 'sentences'."²³ His use of 'they call' (*dicunt*) presumably means that this book was generally known or described as 'sentences'. In his long letter to the pope Bernard refers similarly to Abelard's doctrine of the Redemption, which is to be found "in some book of his 'sentences'."²⁴ Bernard was not necessarily claiming that Abelard himself had given the book this title. For Bernard how this book was described or what it was called was a minor matter, compared with its allegedly heretical contents, whereas for Abelard the title of the book was central to his denial of authorship: no book of his would be entitled 'sentences'.

Because everything was handwritten, medieval authors had greater difficulties than their modern counterparts in distinguishing which work was theirs in a codex and likewise which items remained published or unpublished. The distinguishing title which a work might have would not necessarily help, as the scribe might leave it out or put it in an unexpected place in the manuscript. A medieval codex was not a distinct unit like a printed book, which is usually readily identifiable by its title-page at the front and the author's name on the spine. In the manuscript culture of the Middle Ages written material might circulate, as if it had been published, in unbound booklets or single sheets of

22 Charles H. Burnett and David Luscombe, "A New Student for Peter Abelard: The Marginalia in British Library MS Cotton Faustina A. X," in *Itinéraires de la Raison: Etudes de Philosophie Médiévale Offertes à Maria Cândida Pacheco*, ed. J. F. Meirinhos (Louvain-la-Neuve, 2005), 163–186. See also nn. 51 and 52 below.

23 'Legite et alium, quem dicunt sententiarum eius.' See Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sancti Bernardi Opera*, vol. 8, Letter 188, 11.

24 'In libro quodam sententiarum ipsius.' See *ibid.*, vol. 8, Letter 190, 26.

parchment.²⁵ In Abelard's time the masters in the schools were particularly susceptible to having their opinions reported, or sometimes pirated without their knowledge, in this form. A pirated anthology of a master's 'sentences' might be indistinguishable from an authentic production, as both consisted of handwritten parchments. The risk of unauthorized copying probably contributed to the force with which Abelard denied that he had written a book of 'sentences'.

An extraordinary example of a book of 'sentences' is the *Liber pancrisis*, which proudly declares that it is 'all gold' (*pancrisis* meant all 'all gold' in Greek) because it contains the 'sentences or questions' (*sententie vel questiones*) both of the Church Fathers (Augustine, Jerome, Ambrose, Gregory the Great, Isidore and Bede) and of the 'modern masters' (William of Champeaux, Ivo of Chartres, Anselm of Laon and his brother Ralph).²⁶ William of Champeaux and Anselm of Laon had been Abelard's masters in the period c.1100-c.1115, as he recounts in his *Historia calamitatum*, and the canonist Ivo of Chartres was their contemporary (he died in 1115). So this book claimed for its 'sentences' the eminent authority of the leading French masters of the generation before Abelard's and it announced its distinctiveness with its Greek sounding title. (Anselm of Canterbury's *Monologion* and *Proslogion* had established the fashion for Greek sounding titles among scholastic writers; their use does not mean that their authors were fluent in Greek.) It is not clear when the *Liber pancrisis* was first put together. It might have been shortly before, or not long after, the deaths of the three named masters, who are considered to be contemporaries as they are described as 'modern'. However, the earliest surviving manuscripts of the *Liber pancrisis* date from c.1170 which is some fifty years after the deaths of the 'modern masters' (Anselm of Laon died in c.1117 and William of Champeaux in 1122.) One manuscript of the *Liber pancrisis* perhaps preserves an earlier state of the text, as it does not describe William of Champeaux as a bishop whereas it accords this title to Ivo of Chartres.²⁷

25 P. R. Robinson, "The 'Booklet': A Self-Contained Unit in Composite Manuscripts," in *The History of the Book in the West: 400 A.D.-1455*, ed. J. Roberts and P. R. Robinson (Farnham, 2010), 159-182. See also P. R. Robinson, "The Format of Books: Books, Booklets and Rolls," in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, 2 vols., ed. N. Morgan and R. M. Thomson (Cambridge, 2008), vol. 2, 41-54.

26 Cédric Giraud sets out the title pages of the *Liber pancrisis* in Giraud, "Per Verba Magistri", 197, 503. See also Cédric Giraud and Constant J. Mews, "Le *Liber pancrisis*, un florilège des Pères et des maîtres modernes au XII^e siècle," *Archivum Latinitatis Medii Aevi* (Bulletin du Cange) 64 (2004), 145-191.

27 Avranches MS 19. Giraud, "Per Verba Magistri", 197, 503. See also Clanchy and Smith, "Abelard's Description," 20. Mews likewise notes that Avranches MS 19 does not refer

William of Champeaux became bishop of Châlons in 1113. If the earliest version of the *Liber pancrisis* was assembled before 1113, it might have been contemporary with the time when Abelard decided to go to Laon to study with Anselm, who (in Abelard's words) "then held the greatest authority from a long time back."²⁸ At Laon Abelard recalled how "after collations of sentences we students used to joke together."²⁹ What were 'collations of sentences'? We know from the *Liber pancrisis* that Anselm of Laon discussed questions, which probably arose from his explications of Scripture, and that these were described as 'sentences'. *Collations of sentences* might therefore have been group discussions, when the students considered the master's 'sentences'.³⁰ As Abelard describes writing taking place at the school of Laon, it can readily be seen how copies of 'sentences'—first in the form of single sheets and booklets—might have started in the classroom.³¹ A student of Abelard's contemporary in Paris, Master Hugh of Saint Victor, described how he had been designated by his class to take notes when Hugh was lecturing. He therefore commended Hugh's 'sentences' to "writing and memory (*scripto et memorie*)."³² Each week he reported with his writing tablets to Master Hugh and he made any corrections or additions which Hugh required. This student consequently described himself not so much as the 'author' of this work as its 'artificer'.³² If Hugh's practice was widespread in the French schools (we only have this single account of organized note-taking from Abelard's time), books of 'sentences' must have been numerous, but their authenticity would still have been in doubt as they depended on students' work.

to William of Champeaux as a bishop. See Mews, "St Anselm," 198, n. 9. Mews suggests that Anselm of Laon's brother Ralph, who died in ca. 1131, could have been involved in compiling the *Liber pancrisis*.

- 28 *HC*, 67, ed. Hicks (1991), 7: 'Anselmus Laudunensis maximam ex antiquitate auctoritatem tunc tenebat.'
- 29 *Ibid.*, 68, 7: 'Post aliquas sententiarum collationes nos scolares invicem jocaremur.'
- 30 Clanchy and Smith, "Abelard's Description," 19–23. The current translators of *HC* into English all have explanatory notes on this subject: *HC* available in trans. Radice with Clanchy (2004), 251, n. 19; trans. Levitan (2007), 8, n. 16; and ed. and trans. McLaughlin and Wheeler (2009), 21, n. 18.
- 31 *HC*, 69, ed. Hicks (1991), 8: 'Omnes pariter de transcribendis glosis quas prima die inceperam.' *HC*, 70, ed. Hicks (1991), 9: 'si forte in illo opera aliquid per errorem ibi scriberem.'
- 32 'Rogatus, inquam, sum, quatenus ad communem tam mei quam aliorum utilitatem easdem sentencias scripto et memorie commendarem [...] Non enim me huius operis auctorem, sed quodam modo artificem profiteor.' The case of Hugh is cited by Mews, "The *Sententie*," 160, and by Luscombe, et al., *Sent. magistri Petri* (see above), 72–73.

In his denial of Bernard's charge, Abelard regarded the alleged book of 'sentences' as something which had no physical reality; hence it would be found 'nowhere'.³³ By contrast, at the time of the council of Sens, there was a formidable collection of books (in both logic and theology) whose authorship Abelard acknowledged. In warning Bernard that Abelard was again writing novelties, William of St Thierry had specified three books in particular: the *Theologia* ("I confess that the title made me curious to read it"); the *Sic et non* and the *Scito Te Ipsum*.³⁴ William added that there were also "some others, about which I fear that their teaching may be as monstrous as their titles are monstrous."³⁵ He may have thought that Abelard's *Ethica* was a separate book from the *Scito Te Ipsum*, whereas these were alternative titles (one Greek and one Latin) for the same work. William was right to emphasize the startling titles of these works, as Abelard drew attention to this himself in the case of *Theologia*. In his appeal to his supporters at the time of the council of Sens he complained that Bernard had attacked "that work of ours about the holy Trinity, which I had entitled by the name (*intitulaveram nomine*) of *Theologia*, insofar as the Lord granted it to be composed by me."³⁶ The name *Theologia*, made up of the two elements *theos* ('God') and *logos* ('discussion'), was a Greek sounding title comparable with Anselm of Canterbury's *Monologion* and *Proslogion*. *Theologia*, in the modern sense of 'theology', was at the same time a programme of study, combining classical philosophy with the Christian scriptures, of which Abelard saw himself as the pioneer.³⁷ As Abelard declared in *Historia calamitatum*, he believed himself to be the successor of the Peripatetic philosophers of ancient Athens.³⁸ His Greek title for *Theologia* was therefore fashionably appealing to his students as well as being an indication of his radical approach to the new subject of 'theology'.

33 See n. 4 above.

34 'Casu nuper incidi in lectionem cuiusdam libelli hominis illius, cuius titulus erat *Theologia Petri Abaelardi*. Fateor curiosum me fecit titulus ad legendum [...] Sunt autem, ut audio, adhuc eius opuscula, quorum nomina sunt: *Sic et non*, *Scito te Ipsum*.' See Innocent II, "Les Lettres," 377–378.

35 'Et alia quaedam, de quibus timeo, ne sicut monstrosi sunt nominis, sic etiam sint monstrosi dogmatis.' See *ibid.*, 378.

36 'Illud opus nostrum de sancta Trinitate, prout Dominus concessit a nobis compositum, *Theologiae* intitulaveram nomine.' See Klibansky, "Peter Abailard and Bernard of Clairvaux," 6. See also Ziolkowski, *Letters of Peter Abelard*, 106.

37 "Abelard's Theological Project," in Marenbon, *The Philosophy*, 54–81. See also Clanchy, *Abelard*, 264–265.

38 *HC*, 64, ed. Hicks (1991), 4: 'Peripateticorum emulator factus sum,' He was called "Peripateticus Palatinus" by John of Salisbury. See Clanchy, *Abelard*, 96–97, 103, and 130.

Even in the case of *Theologia*, however, there is some ambiguity as to whether this was the title of the book or a description of its approach. In Abelard's account of it in *Historia calamitatum* (which was written some ten years before his trial at Sens) the title is elusive: he describes how *quendam theologie tractatum de unitate et trinitate divina scholaribus nostris componerem*.³⁹ The editors of the Latin text, Jacques Monfrin and Eric Hicks, italicize and capitalize *De Unitate et Trinitate divina* as if this were the title of a book, although there is no warrant for this in the manuscripts. The translators of *Historia calamitatum* into English have followed this lead. Thus Betty Radice in the Penguin Classics edition of the letters of Abelard and Heloise translates this as: "I composed a theological treatise *On the Unity and Trinity of God* for the use of my students." I altered this in my revision of Radice's translation so that it now reads: "I composed a theological treatise on divine unity and trinity."⁴⁰ The subject matter of Abelard's book was the doctrine of the Trinity and it is referred in some manuscripts as *De Trinitate* as if that were its working title. Constant Mews, the editor of *Theologia*, points out that at Abelard's first trial at Soissons in 1121 his book was probably not called by that name.⁴¹ Surprising as it may seem, Abelard may not have given any title to his book at the time of his trial at Soissons; but it there earned its passage—as it were—by surviving being ceremonially burned and so it became in his words "my memorable book" on which he conferred the title *Theologia*.⁴²

The way Abelard gave a title to *Theologia*, probably only after he had written and published it, throws light on our question about his book of 'sentences' because his denial of authorship may simply have meant that no book would be found to which he had—as yet—given the title 'sentences'. The assumption here is that it is an author's prerogative to give titles to his works. Furthermore, in manuscript culture where each copy of a book was bespoke as it were, an author might not think it necessary to confer a title on his book until it had circulated among interested readers and established itself as an item which was going to be referred to. In this respect Anselm of Canterbury gives a revealing account of how his books got their titles *Monologion* and *Proslogion*:

39 HC, 82–83, ed. Hicks (1991), 21.

40 Radice, *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, revised ed., 20 and 87.

41 Constant J. Mews, *Abelard and Heloise* (Oxford, 2005), 103.

42 'Compuerunt propria manu librum memoratum meum in ignem proicere,' HC, 87, ed. Hicks (1991), 25. Modern translators [see note 14 above] of this passage do not translate Abelard's adjective 'memoratus': see Radice (rev. Clanchy), p. 24; Levitan, p. 26; McLaughlin and Wheeler, p. 34.

I judged (he explains) that neither the one (*Proslogion*) nor the other (*Monologion*) was worthy of the name of a 'book' ('liber') and neither did the name of their author deserve to be placed at the beginning. Nevertheless, I thought that neither [book] should be issued without some sort of title, so that they might invite anyone, into whose hands they came, to read them for themselves in some way. So I gave each one its title, calling the first *An Example of Meditating on the Meaning of Faith* and the other *Faith Seeking Understanding*.⁴³

Anselm's reluctance to give any titles to his books, or to acknowledge his authorship of them, arose in his case from his professional humility as a monk; but it also reduced the chances of his being prosecuted for heresy, as he was addressing a very controversial subject without citing authorities in the customary way. Nor was this the end of the story. Anselm explained that many people had transcribed these books after he had given them their Latin titles; but Hugh archbishop of Lyons, who was the papal legate in France, ordered him—by virtue of his apostolic authority—to put his name at the beginning of his books. "Therefore, so that this should be more fitting", Anselm continues, "I named the one *Monologion* (that is, 'soliloquy') and the other *Proslogion* (that is, 'an address')." ⁴⁴ Why these Greek titles were considered 'more fitting' (*aptius*) than the Latin ones is difficult to understand. Perhaps the Latin titles, which made clear that Anselm was debating about the Christian faith, were thought by the papal legate to be potentially unorthodox. Anselm therefore obediently obscured the significance of his books by giving them single-word Greek titles, which sounded well even though they were devoid of meaning for his Latin readers.

Abelard had found himself at the council of Soissons in 1121 in a situation not dissimilar from Anselm's forty years earlier. He was accused of allowing many people to transcribe his book, even though he had not got papal permission to

43 'Nec istud nec illud cuius supra memini dignum libri nomine aut cui auctoris praeponeretur nomen iudicabam, nec tamen eadem sine aliquo titulo, quo aliquem in cuius manus venirent quodam modo ad se legendum invitarent, dimittenda putabam: unicuique suum dedi titulum, ut prius *Exemplum meditandi de ratione fidei*, et sequens *Fides quaerens intellectum* diceretur.' See Anselm, *Proslogion*, in *Sancti Anselmi Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi Opera Omnia*, ed. F. S. Schmitt (Edinburgh, 1946), 1 and 94. R. Sharpe, "Anselm as Author: Publishing in the Late Eleventh Century," *Journal of Medieval Latin* 19 (2009), 1–87, here 19.

44 Anselm, *Proslogion*, 94: 'Quod ut aptius fieret, illud quidem *Monologion*, id est soliloquium, istud vero *Proslogion*, id est alloquium, nominavi.'

publish it.⁴⁵ The difference between their situations is that Anselm was careful to get papal approval for his publications, whereas Abelard took no such care either before the council of Soissons or after it. (The rule that Anselm had been applying was the catch-all that "no Christian should dispute about anything which the Catholic Church believes with its heart and confesses with its mouth.")⁴⁶ This is what enabled William of St Thierry and Bernard to allege at the time of the council of Sens in 1141 that Abelard's books, including the book of 'sentences', contained heresies. Anselm and Abelard make a contrast too in the way they presented themselves and their writings. Anselm claimed to be humble while in fact being very successful at ecclesiastical politics, whereas (according to Otto of Freising) Abelard was arrogant and 'almost stupid' when it came to any sort of business or negotiation.⁴⁷

Once the search for incriminating texts had been initiated by William of St Thierry in 1140, Abelard's admirers were as much of a danger to him as his opponents, as some of them were very probably circulating copies of his teachings in the form of 'sentences'. The contentious answers attributed to Abelard in the Old English copy of the Rule of St Benedict illustrate this very well, though they seem to have been written down in this form in England a few years after Abelard's death. (The year 1148 is given at the end of this text; but this date may not refer to the time of writing, as Innocent II had ordered Abelard's books to be burned in 1141.)⁴⁸ To give just one example of a contentious question from the Old English Rule of St Benedict, "it is asked whether Eve could have eaten of the forbidden fruit without being disobedient [if she were] forgetful of the Lord's command."⁴⁹ To which Abelard is reported to have answered that she could indeed eat of the forbidden fruit without disobedience, "if that might happen to her by chance, or if she were forgetful of the command, or if she

45 HC, 87, ed. Hicks (1991), 25: 'Dicebant enim ad dampnationem libelli satis hoc esse debere quod nec romani pontificis nec Ecclesie auctoritate eum commendatum legere publice presumpseram, atque ad transcribendum jam pluribus eum ipse prestitissem.' Michael T. Clanchy, "Abelard's Mockery of St Anselm," *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 41 (1990), 14–16. Mews, "St Anselm," 219–220.

46 'Nullus quippe Christianus debet disputare, quomodo quod catholica ecclesia corde credit et ore confitetur,' *De Incarnatione Verbi*, in *Sancti Anselmi Opera Omnia*, ed. Schmitt, 2 and 6.

47 'Ad alia negotia pene stolidiorum ferax.' See Otto of Freising, *Gesta Frederici Seu Rectius Cronica*, ed. F.-J. Schmale (Berlin, 1965), 224.

48 Burnett and Luscombe, "A New Student" [cf. above], 185–186. For Innocent II's instruction to burn Abelard's books see note 21 above.

49 'Queritur an Eva oblita mandati domini potuerit comedere de vetito pomo, quin esset inobediens.' See Burnett and Luscombe, "A New Student," 173, no. 6.

might think that this was not the forbidden fruit but some fruit other than that of the tree of life.”⁵⁰

It is impossible to know the context in which Abelard was teaching when he launched into this discussion; he might have been commenting verse by verse on the early part of the book of Genesis (the *Hexaemeron*), or he might have been discussing morality in philosophical terms as in his book on *Ethics*. It is even harder to judge the tone of the statements attributed to him. Was his suggestion meant seriously that Eve may have been confused about which tree was which in the Garden of Eden? This is contradicted by the Scripture itself, where Eve answers the serpent with clarity: “Of the fruit of the trees that are in paradise, we do eat. But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of paradise, God hath commanded us that we should not eat.”⁵¹ By taking this extreme case of Eve’s first sin, Abelard was perhaps aiming to confront his students with a dilemma to see if they could work out how ideas of will (*voluntas*) and consent (*consensu*) interacted in a philosophical definition of sin.⁵² In his teaching he had a widespread and long established reputation as a jester; he was not a ‘doctor’ but a ‘joculator’.⁵³ “He cannot restrain his laughter”, Bernard argued, “listen to his jeering.”⁵⁴ Abelard may have been so insistent that he had not written a book of ‘sentences’ because he knew that citations out of context, like those in the Old English copy of the Rule of St Benedict for example, were the most likely to expose him to prosecution.

It might be thought that the edition in 2006 of Abelard’s ‘sentences’ in the *Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis* series would resolve the question of his authorship once and for all. This publication has had the peculiar effect of invalidating Abelard’s assurance that “nowhere may be found any book written by me which is called ‘sentences’,” as the edition names him as *Magister Petrus Abaelardus* on its title-page. In his translation of some of Abelard’s letters in 2008 Jan Ziolkowski asks—unusually—for Abelard’s forbearance and understanding: “If Abelard travelled across time to assess my work, I hope that

50 ‘Si forte contingeret eam vel fuisse oblita mandati vel putaret non esse vetitum pomum, immo aliquid aliud pomum quam de lingo vite.’ See *ibid.*, 173.

51 ‘De fructu lignorum quae sunt in paradiso vescimur; de fructu vero ligni, quod est in medio paradisi, praecepit nobis Deus ne comederemus.’ Genesis 3,2–3, English translation from Douay version.

52 See “Will and Consent,” in Marenbon, *The Philosophy*, 258–264.

53 ‘Plus vices agere jocularis quam doctoris.’ See *Vita Gosuini*, in *Recueil des historiens de la France*, ed. M. Bouquet (Paris, 1806), 442E. I bring together references to Abelard as a jester in Clanchy, “Abelard’s Mockery,” 19–23.

54 ‘Non potest tenere risum. Audite cachinnos.’ See Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sancti Bernardi Opera*, vol. 8, Letter 190, 35.

he would not feel outraged and make me bear the full brunt of his often scathing criticism."⁵⁵ Would Abelard, as a time traveller, feel outraged by the 2006 edition of the 'sentences' published in his name? The *Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis* edition consists of two texts which contrast with each other, edited by David Luscombe and Constant Mews respectively. Mews reconstructs what he can of the controversial lost book of 'sentences' by bringing together the citations from Abelard's works used in their accusations by William of St Thierry, the initiator of Abelard's prosecution, and by Bernard and Thomas of Morigny who assisted him.⁵⁶ The result is a collection of fragments, twenty-five in number, which are not sufficient to allow us to see the shape of this book as a whole. It is possible, however, that this lost book of 'sentences' did indeed consist of random citations of Abelard's writings taken out of context and this is why it was so objectionable to him.

The text edited by David Luscombe is very different, as it is much longer and more coherent. It was first published by F. H. Rheinwald in 1835 from a manuscript, which had recently been deposited in Munich from the abbey of St Emmeram in Regensburg, and which had the title in that library of *Petri Abaelardi Sententiae*.⁵⁷ Rheinwald was well aware that Abelard denied that he had written a book of 'sentences'. In order to isolate his discovery from disputes about Abelard's 'sentences', Rheinwald gave his text a title of his own invention: it was *Petri Abaelardi Epitome Theologiae Christianae* and it is in this form that it found its way in 1855 into the volume of Abelard's works in Migne's *Patrologiae*.⁵⁸ (I will describe this work henceforward as the Epitome because describing it as 'sentences' contradicts Abelard and it causes it to be confused with other collections of 'sentences'.)⁵⁹ At the outset of his edition Luscombe describes the Epitome as "the only work by Abelard which attempts a comprehensive synthesis of his teaching of theology" and in his conclusion

55 Ziolkowski, *Letters of Peter Abelard*, li.

56 Constant J. Mews, ed., "Liber Sententiarum Magistri Petri," CCCM (2006), 162–171. First published in Mews, "The *Sententie*," 177–183.

57 This manuscript is now located in Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 14160, as described in Mews, "The *Sententie*," 135, and in *Sent. magistri Petri*, ed. Luscombe, et al., 34–38.

58 F. H. Rheinwald ed., *Petri Abaelardi Epitome Theologiae Christianae*, in J. P. Migne, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina*, 178 (1855), *Petri Abaelardi Opera Omnia*, cols. 1685–1758.

59 Mews's fundamental article on "The *Sententie* of Peter Abelard" describes the Epitome in four different ways: as *Sententie* (131–133, 138, 139, 142, 144–156, and 159–163); as *Sententie Abaelardi* (133, 134, 140, 155, 161, and 164); as *Sententie A.* (158, 159, and 168); and as *Sent. A.* (133–137 and 140–142).

he confirms that this “work provides a coherent account of Abelard’s doctrine on all those matters, essential to salvation, which are outlined at the beginning of the *Theologia ‘Scholarium’*.”⁶⁰

Is it likely that Abelard would have put on hold his fundamental thinking about logic, ethics and Christian doctrine in order to make a summary of his theological teaching for students in the form of the Epitome? Perhaps he might have done so. According to John of Salisbury, who was his student in logic in the mid-1130s, Abelard aimed everywhere to facilitate understanding.⁶¹ “He preferred”, John explains, “to instruct his [students] and move them forward by elementary steps, rather than being made more obscure by the gravity of philosophers.”⁶² Perhaps therefore Abelard might have written something as simplistic in appearance as the Epitome with its lucid propositions which succinctly bring together Abelard’s teaching on the Trinity, the nature of God and Redemption in Christ, and the Sacraments. Alternatively, it is possible that the Epitome was assembled by students who combined some texts of Abelard’s with what they had heard of his oral teaching.⁶³ These students might well have described the little book which they put together as *The sentences of Master Peter Abelard*, where ‘sentences’ meant the master’s essential teachings. The production and copying of this book of Abelard’s ‘sentences’ did not mean that he had personally written it or dictated it. He may never even have seen it or known of its existence. This would explain why he was astonished by Bernard’s attribution of it to him and why—in good faith—he could deny that any such book had ever been ‘written by me’. The book could indeed contain ‘sentences’ of Abelard’s without him ever having written it or approved it.

60 *Sent. magistri Petri* 6, ed. Luscombe, et al. (2006), 64. The whole of Luscombe’s paragraph at 64 derives from Mews, “The *Sententie*,” 155.

61 ‘Ubique facilitas generanda. Quem morem secutum recolo Perpateticum Palatinum.’ See John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon*, 3.1, 103.

62 ‘Malens instruere et promovere suos in puerilibus, quam in gravitate philosophorum esse obscurior.’ See *ibid.* *Metalogicon*, 3.1, 103.

63 “Strands of oral and literary transmission are both woven inextricably into the text which now survives as the *Sententie Abaelardi*.” See Mews, “The *Sententie*,” 155, repeated in *Sent. magistri Petri*, ed. Luscombe et al. (2006), 64.

Veiled Platonic Triads in Abelard's *Theologia 'Summi Boni'*

Lesley-Anne Dyer

A masterful rhetorician, Bernard of Clairvaux once famously accused Peter Abelard of equating the Holy Spirit with the World Soul and concluded that, in struggling so hard to make Plato a Christian, Abelard showed himself to be a heathen.¹ Employing the technique of 'paralipsis'—a figure of speech which draws attention to something while pretending to ignore it—his accusation concerning the World Soul is one of a list of things he calls 'children's tales' (*naenias*) that are not worthy of rebuke. He writes all of this to Pope Innocent II in *Epistola* 190 (c. 1140), a letter which mostly criticizes the details of Abelard's other, non-Platonic theological teachings, particularly his use of Aristotelian logic to explain the Trinity and his explanation of the atonement, which in Bernard's view is a form of moral exemplarism.² The problem, according to Bernard of Clairvaux, is relatively simple: Abelard's love affair with dialectic hinders his ability to approach Christian mysteries appropriately.

Although this accusation is given in an off-hand, belittling fashion, what is interesting about it is that Abelard explicitly condemns the idea that the World Soul is the Holy Spirit in *Dial.*, 5.558–559, where he ridicules those who think that the Platonic Triad of God, Mind, and World Soul corresponds allegorically to the Christian Trinity. This allegorical interpretation, he says, is particularly problematic when applied to the fiction (*figmentum*) of the World Soul. Furthermore, a contemporary historian of the day, Otto of Freising reports that Abelard denied having ever held such a view.³ Abelard does, however, speak of the Holy Spirit as a covering or *involucrum* for the Holy Spirit in the three major recensions of his *Theologia*, which raises the question of what he means

1 'Spiritus Sanctum esse animam mundi; mundum iuxta Platonem tanto excellentius animal esse, quanto meliorem animam habet Spiritum Sanctum. Ubi dum multum sudat, quomodo Platonem faciat christianum, se probat ethnicum.' See Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sancti Bernardi Opera*, vol. 8, 39.

2 To this list were appended nineteen heretical statements. See Buytaert, *Petri Abaelardi Opera Theologica*, 279.

3 *Apol.*; *Gesta Friderici Imperatoris*, MGH, lib. 1, Script. 20, 378–379. See also L. Moonan, "Abelard's Use of the *Timaeus*," in *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge* (1989), 60, n. 90. William of St Thierry mentions something similar in a letter to Bernard. See William of St Thierry, *Disputatio adversus*, 5, 36–38. See also Innocent II, "Les Lettres," 377.

by this term. Puzzles like these give delight to scholars, inciting debates over the dating of the *Dialectica*, whether Abelard changed his mind at some point after its writing (perhaps out of fear of further rebuke), and whether Bernard's accusations concerning Abelard's Platonism were just. The first editor of the *Dial.*, Victor Cousin, argued that this passage represents a formal recantation of Abelard's earlier position, but D'Olwer, Mews, and De Rijk have more recently argued that the *Dial.* was an earlier work (c. 1117–1119). On the basis of this new dating, some have concluded that Abelard changed his mind after he wrote the *Dial.* and before he started his theological works.⁴

Here I will argue that Abelard's theological appropriation of the World Soul should be seen within the larger context of not one, but *two* Platonic triads that were widely available and used in the medieval tradition—the God-Mind-Soul triad and the God-Archetype-Matter triad. These triads represent 'textbook' Platonism and as such became key centers for discussion. The main text considered will be the earliest extant text of Abelard's theological works, the *Theologia 'Summi Boni'*. Later revisions will be referred to only when necessary because it has been widely acknowledged that Augustine is one of the key sources for this first edition and my argument addresses the nature of Abelard's use of Augustine when it comes to these triads.⁵ In addition, the kernel of most of Abelard's theology can be found in this first text.⁶

After a discussion of extant scholarship and the issues at stake for dealing with the two Platonic triads in a Christian context, this chapter analyses the Augustinian influence upon Abelard's interest in Platonism. Abelard's viewpoint is then positioned among the other significant Platonic interpreters of his day, including Bernard of Chartres, William of Conches, and Thierry of Chartres. Finally, it is shown that each of these thinkers differed significantly on four things—firstly, how the first triad relates to the Trinity; secondly, how the second triad relates to Creation; thirdly, how both triads together can relate

4 For more on the arguments about the dating of the piece, see ed. De Rijk, *Petrus Abaelardus: Dialectica* (1970), xxi–xxiii; and John Marenbon, "The Platonisms of Peter Abelard," in *Néoplatonisme et philosophie médiévale*, ed. L. G. Benakis, *Rencontres de philosophie médiévale* 6 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 118–119.

5 The introduction to the *TSch*, ed. Buytaert and Mews (1987), 203–308 gives an extensive account of the differences between recensions, including a chart that shows where overlapping sections can be located in the different versions. For the full citation, see *infra*. The discussion of the *TSB*'s Augustinianism can be found on page 204.

6 Willemien Otten has observed this point and writes that the core of Abelard's theological doctrines can be found in this first theology in Willemien Otten, *From Paradise to Paradigm: A Study of Twelfth-Century Humanism*, Brill's Studies in Intellectual History (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 149.

the Trinity to Creation; and fourthly, how one ought to use language to describe the Divine Nature in the act of Creation. These comparisons will reveal that the nature of Abelard's originality in these matters is significant for his metaphysical theories as well as his search for the possibility of converting 'pagans,' namely Muslims, to Christianity, particularly in Abelard's *Dialogus inter Philosophum, Iudaeum, et Christianum*, otherwise known as the *Collationes*.

Current scholarship on Abelard's theological works has focused on two related questions. First, did Abelard change his mind on the World Soul after reading the *Timaeus*? And if he did, was it a radical shift or merely a nuancing of position concerning the relationship between Christianity and Platonism? Second, what exactly is Abelard's doctrine concerning the World Soul when he refers to it as an *involutrum* of the Holy Spirit?

Could Abelard have changed his mind about the World Soul when he encountered the *Timaeus* for the first time? In 'Abelard's Use of the *Timaeus*,' Moonan argues on the basis of verbatim citation that Abelard probably encountered the *Timaeus* later in life, perhaps at St Denis. He does not conclude, however, that theological works which cite the *Timaeus* contradict the *Dial.*; rather, Moonan thinks that the *Dial.* merely refutes those who tried to ascribe (*conantur ascribere*) to Plato the idea of one to one allegorical correspondence of the World Soul and the Holy Spirit.⁷ When Abelard gained more information, he could then develop a subtler argument. If you understand the World Soul as an 'enfolding image' (*involutrum*) of the temporal mission of the Holy Spirit, it helps to explain why one cannot make a direct allegorical comparison between the God-Mind-Soul triad and the Holy Trinity. While using Moonan's work on Platonic citation, Marenbon concludes the opposite and believes that Abelard's discovery of the *Timaeus* led him to be amenable to an allegorical correspondence of the World Soul and Holy Spirit but that this openness to Platonism has no affect on his philosophical metaphysics, only on his Trinitarian theology.⁸

Whether Abelard changed his mind depends, in part, upon what one understands Abelard to be saying about the World Soul as *involutrum*. Rather than thinking that Abelard equated the World Soul with the Holy Spirit in all respects, most scholars have agreed that Abelard primarily means that the World Soul is merely an *involutrum* of the temporal procession of the Holy Spirit, developing insights further along these lines. Marenbon, for instance,

7 Moonan, "Abelard's Use of the *Timaeus*," 59.

8 Marenbon, "The Platonisms of Peter Abelard," 118–119.

writes that for Abelard, “although the Holy Spirit existed eternally, it could be called the World Soul only once other things were created.”⁹

What then does it mean to say that the World Soul is an *involutum* of the temporal mission of the Holy Spirit? Tullio Gregory has surmised that Abelard was reading Plato mystically, in the same way that the Scriptures were often read during that time.¹⁰ He observes that originally *allegoria* was the preferred term in biblical exegesis and *involutum/integumentum* in poetic-mythic exegesis. Abelard’s use of *involutum* mixes both pagan and biblical exegetical techniques. He means both a wrapping that conceals intelligible truth that exists outside of time and “pre-figuration of truths, which though unknown to the ancient authors, were destined to be accomplished in the course of time.”¹¹ Language that seemed to suggest that the World Soul, and therefore the Holy Spirit, was created could be attributed merely to imprecision of speech. Plato could have written truths about the Holy Spirit in the *involutum* of the World Soul without even knowing the fullness about which he spoke.

In understanding the nature of *involutum*, Moonan takes a slightly different approach and translates it as ‘enfolding image,’ based upon a contrast between *involute* and *explicite* in the *Dialectica*.¹² An enfolding image is designed to contain hidden truth, even if it gets at only one aspect of that truth. Abelard was against reading the World Soul as an allegory of the Holy Spirit, even though he supported viewing it as an image of hidden truth about certain aspects of the Holy Spirit’s nature. Thus, the World Soul represented only the temporal procession of the Holy Spirit.¹³

The one exception to this focus on the temporal mission of the Holy Spirit is Von Moos, who observes that Abelard’s conversion from logic to rhetoric in his later years led him to focus less on the normal meaning of a word (*proprietas*),

9 Ibid.

10 Tullio Gregory, “Abélard et Platon,” *Studi Medievali* 3a, no. 13 (1972), 539–562.

11 Tullio Gregory, “The Platonic Inheritance,” in *A History of Twelfth-Century Philosophy*, ed. Peter Dronke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 58–59.

12 Moonan, “Abelard’s Use of the *Timaeus*,” 56.

13 Ibid., 68–69. Moonan outlines six possible readings of this passage before settling on the one given above: (1) a one to one correspondence; (2) a correspondence of temporal functions; (3) the World Soul as an “illuminating” enfolding image of the third person of the Trinity; (4) the World Soul as an enfolding image of the temporal mission of the Holy Spirit (Moonan’s preferred reading); (5) an analogy between the temporal mission of the Holy Ghost and the World Soul that means one can infer something about the third person of the Trinity; and (6) the World Soul as an “acceptable reduction” of Christian doctrines on the temporal mission of the Holy Spirit.

becoming more aware that theological texts often contain a poetic dimension in their diction because of the ineffability of their subject matter.¹⁴ One can see this in the prologue to *Sic et non*, where it is argued that the frequent use of figurative language by Biblical writers makes the study of rhetoric more important for the study of theology than grammar or logic. Thus, his approach resembles Gregory's comparison of Abelard's reading of Plato to his reading of Scripture, but it highlights the ineffable dimension of theological realities.

While Willemien Otten holds the mainstream view that the World Soul signifies primarily the immanent, temporal mission of the Holy Spirit, she too assigns the apparent creation of the World Soul to the imperfection of language when describing theological realities. She observes that Abelard assigns a full belief in the Trinity to the pagan philosophers, even when the Jews did not have it, and that anything that appears to imply the Creation of the *Nous* or the World Soul is merely a result of the *involutrum*'s imperfection of language.¹⁵ She also proposes a typological significance of the World Soul for Abelard: As the World Soul animates the world like a soul animates a body, so Jerusalem sits at the center of the world affecting the rest of it.¹⁶ The final approach to Abelard's use of *involutrum* when discussing the World Soul can be found in Bezner.¹⁷ While Bezner agrees in his recently published book that *involutrum* was more than lack-lustre allegorical reading for Abelard, he thinks this reading is a strategy for advancing his growing skepticism against old Platonic readings entering the text. The idea of *involutrum* made possible a rational way to meditate on matters of faith that would counterbalance Bernard of Clairvaux's desire for absolute (and atemporal) mystery.

There are good reasons for most of the secondary literature's focus upon Abelard's understanding of the World Soul, and yet, as I suggested, these discussions should be placed within a larger context of the two—not just one—Platonic triads at issue in Abelard's appropriation of the World Soul. The issues concerning the Holy Spirit and the World Soul extend farther and have larger repercussions than whether pious or naïve medieval thinkers might find a Trinitarian resemblance in the God-Mind-Soul triad. This should come as no surprise given our understanding of Abelard's character and interests. Let us consider then what is at stake, for Platonism as a philosophical system and for Christian Platonism in particular.

14 Von Moos, "Literary Aesthetics," 90–91.

15 Otten, *From Paradise to Paradigm*, 167–168.

16 Ibid., 165–166.

17 Bezner, *Vela Veritatis*, 106–121.

Both the God-Mind-Soul and the God-Archetype-Matter triad concern the relationship of God with the world on both a physical and metaphysical level. For a 'pagan' Platonic philosopher, the main issues concern the relationship of an unchanging God with a changeable world. This relationship is understood in terms of a cycle of procession through causation of the metaphysical and physical world and reversion through the soul's growing knowledge of the Good. For a Christian Platonist, the issue of whether the God-Mind-Soul triad is a sort of proto-Trinity knowable by reason alone is only the tip of the iceberg. Since each of the triads relate to philosophical questions of Creation and the metaphysical structure of the universe, anyone wishing to use pagan theories of forms must find some way to reconcile them acceptably with Christian doctrine and Scripture in a way that acknowledges the role that each individual Trinitarian person plays in the creating and sustaining of the universe. That is, Christians must ponder the relationship between a Trinitarian God, the divine ideas, informed matter, and forms conceived by human minds.

This nexus of complex relationships becomes further complicated by a term for God that Christian and pagan Platonist appear to have in common, that is, God as the Good or Highest Good. Within non-Christian Platonism, a major issue concerning the correspondence of the Good with both Platonic triads is how one defines Demiurge. The Good might be equatable to God in the God-Mind-Soul triad, but not with God in the God-Form-Matter triad, unless, like Calcidius, you have different definitions of Demiurge such that God, Mind, and Soul are understood to be a demiurge in a different way. What is at stake in such discussions is how one understands matter to receive forms of the Good, which allow the human soul to then ascend back to the Good through the recognition and contemplation of these forms. Defining what you mean by demiurge in relation to the God-Mind-Soul triad helps to illuminate the causative process of procession, which is the precondition for reversion of the soul through contemplation. Within a Christian context, this process of procession and reversion raises further questions about the operation of individual members of the Trinity in the Creation of the world (and human cognition of this divine Creation) because the Highest Good is both a Creator and a Trinity. If the operations of the individual persons of the Trinity play distinct roles in Creation, might this mean that it is possible for human souls to employ reason to discern these operations and persons, especially if these same persons are at work in both the gift and process of human reason?

Abelard signals his interest in these questions by beginning his *TSB* with the accusative object of his first sentence, "the perfection of the Highest Good,

what God is...¹⁸ The full sentence will be dealt with at length below, but it is worth considering Abelard's choice of words here. The exact formula for Abelard's definition of God is his own, but it appears to derive from Augustine's use of the Highest Good in *De civ. Dei*, a text which underlies most of the *TSB*, even though it is cited only a few times. In *De civ. Dei*, Augustine frames what he considers to be the main issue between the pagans and Christians as a disagreement over what is the highest good. At the beginning of book 8, Augustine turns his attention to what he calls 'natural theology,' a major part of what is often called philosophy or love of wisdom. All men naturally want to be happy, and if they use their reason to pursue this happiness, they will love Wisdom. Enfolded within this love of Wisdom is actually the love of God because he made all things in his Wisdom, and so, all good philosophy turns out to be a form of natural theology. The happiness that all men seek is to be found in the Christian God who is the Highest Good and the one Best thing, even though many pagans seek this good elsewhere.¹⁹ Of all pagans that seek the highest good in their philosophy, Augustine chooses to engage with the Platonists because Platonism is the closest of the pagan philosophies to Christian Truth and therefore the Platonists may be considered his most worthy adversaries. Augustine praises Plato in particular for his recognition of providence and benevolence in Creation. He also meditates extensively upon Plato's metaphor of the craftsman and explores its relative fittingness in describing Creation from nothing. Concerning the Platonists, however, he has a mixed assessment, commending Plotinus while pouring upon Porphyry scathing rebuke.²⁰ Ultimately, Augustine argues that if the Platonists truly want to pursue the Highest Good, which is the immutable God, as they say they do, that they should accept the incarnation, which is the universal way of the human soul's deliverance.²¹ Thus, by calling God the Highest Good, Augustine simultaneously sets up both the preconditions for pagans finding the Christian God as they seek the

18 Translations used in the text throughout this work are my own, but citations to full translations are given in the footnotes. For *TSB*, they come from the critical edition, CCCM 13, unless otherwise noted: 'Summi boni perfectionem quod deus est, ipsa dei sapientia incarnata Christus dominus describendo tribus nominibus diligenter distinxit, cum unicam et singularem, individuum penitus ac simplicem substantiam diuinam patrem et filium et spiritum sanctum tribus de causis appellauerit' (1.1.1.1–8.87).

19 Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, trans. Dyson, CCL 47–48. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 10.1.19–20, 15.20.24, 19.4.73 and 19.4.170; cf. *De moribus*, CSEL 90, 1.8. Translation available in NPNF 4.

20 Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, CCL 47–48, 10.2 and 14.

21 Ibid., 10.32.

highest good and the point of contention between Christians and pagans over the nature of the highest good.

While Augustine's texts focuses upon the battle between Christians and pagans over this issue, Abelard uses Augustine's text to highlight the points of common ground, which are conditions for the possibility of dialogue, leading to eventual conversion, between Christians, pagan philosophers (mostly Muslim at this time), and Jews. Following Augustine's lead, Abelard calls Plato, 'the greatest of the philosophers' (*maximus philosophorum*),²² and he justifies his own use of Platonic and pagan texts by quoting at length *De civ. Dei* 8, 3 and 8, 11 and *Confessiones* 7, 9.13.²³ Abelard also cites Augustine directly as a historical testimony for the existence of individuals who had natural knowledge of some aspect of a Trinitarian God.²⁴ And like Augustine, Abelard makes the distinction between Plato truly depicting the Trinity in the creating and sustaining process and the fullness of knowledge that comes from knowing the Holy Spirit by the names given by the incarnate Christ. Although Abelard deals at length with natural theology, the first line of his treatise suggests that the Incarnation of the divine Word is the foundation of our knowledge of the Trinity by the names of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit:

The very incarnate Wisdom of God, Christ the Lord, carefully distinguished the perfection of the highest Good—what God is—by describing it with three names when he called the divine substance—one and single, ultimately indivisible and simple—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit for three reasons.²⁵

Thus, the incarnate Word was the first to reveal the Holy Trinity according to the names of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Possibly through various modes of revelation, these personal distinctions of the Godhead are known and revealed to us by their effect upon us. The Father is known through his omnipotence, which none can resist. The Son, which is the same divine substance, is known according to the discretion of its particular wisdom (*secundum proprie sapientiae discretionem*), by which it can truly divide and discern all things. And the Holy Spirit is called according to the grace of its benevolence (*secundum*

22 *TSB*, 1.5.36.349, 99.

23 *Ibid.*, 1.6.57–58, 106–107, and 1.6.67–68, 111–112.

24 *Ibid.*, 1.5.32, 97.

25 See *infra* for Latin text.

benignitatis suae gratiam). This Spirit saves us not by merit but by gifts of grace, doing what unaided human effort could not.²⁶

The role of divine causation in the path to knowledge of God is central for Abelard. It will be seen that pagan knowledge of the Trinity does not imply that reason alone may rise to this knowledge without grace. Abelard cannot conceive of a natural reason without grace because nature is infused by grace. The common pursuit of the Highest Good is not made possible by reason alone but by the aid of the prevenient grace of the Holy Spirit. This grace takes many forms, including inspired reason and faith in revelation. It is particularly evident in Scripture but also may be found in the pagan philosophers and prophets. Abelard discusses this grace in light of both the texts of Genesis and Plato's *Timaeus* (and even this comparison has its roots in Augustine's *De civitate Dei*, 11, 21). While both the Jews and the Platonists had texts that revealed aspects of Trinitarian Creation, these texts were not the result of pure reason but of inspirational grace designed to lead to ultimate fulfillment in Christianity, becoming fully known through the Incarnation. Although Scripture is the supreme authority over all human literature, the Incarnation gives full knowledge to the possessors of both pagan writings and inspired scriptures. The Jews had more authoritative scriptures, but both Jews and pagans are responsible for humbly receiving the fullness of the Highest Good that is found in Christ.

This fascination with not merely faith and reason, but with the grace of faith and the grace of reason, grounds the conditions for the possibility of dialogical inquiry among faith traditions, leading to conversion. Abelard argues that knowledge of the Trinity is not only the revelations of the perfection of the Highest Good but is useful for persuading and that to this end the Incarnate Word preached the Fear and Love of God: we ought to fear God for his power and wisdom and to love him for his benevolence.²⁷ The revelation that the Jews and Pagans received previously should make it easier for them to receive the Christian truth in the time of grace.

One might see Abelard's *Dialogus inter Philosophum, Iudaeum, et Christianum*, otherwisely known as the *Collationes*, as a culmination of this line of thought. In this work, the Philosopher initially talks with a Jew but eventually finds what he is looking for in his dialogue with a Christian. When the Philosopher comes to a fuller appreciation of Truth through his dialogue with the Christian, the Christian and the Philosopher then engage in a mutual contemplation of God as 'Highest Good.' The Philosopher is clearly Islamic in this dialogue because

26 One can find this idea of Spirit as gift (*donum*) in Hilary of Poitiers, *De Trinitate*, 2.1; Augustine, *De vera religione*, 13.24; and *De fides et symbolo*, 9.19 and passim.

27 *TSB*, 1.2–1.4, 87–88.

he describes himself as a circumcised descendent of Ishmael.²⁸ This choice of identification of the Philosopher may imply Abelard thinks how one deals with the Platonist philosophers of old might affect one's dealings with Muslim interlocutors. This would suggest that Abelard's interest in dialogue with philosophers had contemporary significance and arises out of a strong belief in the prevenient grace of the Holy Spirit, a kind of grace that he elaborates upon when he contemplates what it might mean to think of the Holy Spirit in terms of the World Soul.

It appears then that Peter Abelard had strong motivations for investigating Platonism and its relationship with Christianity. He also had the opportunity to explore this interest fruitfully because he lived in an age of resurgent interest in the *Timaeus* and other Platonic texts. These texts are being read anew, and commonplaces are being reconsidered. This resurgence had started with renewed eleventh-century copying of Calcidius' translation and commentary on the *Timaeus*.²⁹ The tradition of the two Platonic triads was a major locus for this renewed contemplation, and the sophistication in engagement with these issues appears to develop rapidly over a fifty-year period.

There were three particularly significant figures involved in the twelfth-century resurgence of Platonism who are worth comparing with Abelard: Bernard of Chartres, William of Conches, and Thierry of Chartres. Through this comparison, Abelard's particular subtlety on these matters will become evident. Bernard of Chartres (d. 1124) is the earliest of the three. His *Glosae super Platonem* (c. 1100–1115) came to replace the traditional Calcidian commentary in the twelfth century because it incorporated parts of Calcidius while also being shorter, more concise, and easier to use.³⁰ For these reasons, his commentary has been credited with the twelfth-century peak of interest in the *Timaeus*, and there are strong reasons to believe that it may have been the one accompanying Abelard's text, even though it does not attempt

28 *Coll.*, 39, ed. and trans. Orlandi and Marenbon (2001). For more on the identity of the Philosopher, see the introduction in *Coll.*, 1–liv.

29 For the development of the manuscript history, see Anna Somfai, "The Eleventh-Century Shift in the Reception of Plato's *Timaeus* and Calcidius' Commentary," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 65 (2002), 1–21. Somfai illustrates how the changes in the production of Platonic manuscripts in the eleventh century may have paved the way for twelfth-century interests in Platonism. She also mentions the documented use of Calcidius (rather than Cicero) by Lanfranc, Anselm's teacher.

30 Bernard of Chartres, *Glosae super Platonem*, ed. Paul Edward Dutton, *Studies and Texts* 107 (Toronto: PIMS, 1991), 6–8.

any direct correlation between the World Soul and the Holy Spirit.³¹ William of Conches (c. 1090–1154) was a near contemporary of Abelard (c. 1079–1142) who also wrote a commentary. His *Timaeus* commentary is based on Bernard of Chartres' but strives for more definitive answers to metaphysical questions that arise in the text.³² This influential commentary was read as a textbook in the schools of Paris between 1234 and 1250.³³ While William's commentary considers associating the World Soul with the Holy Spirit, it eventually denies this possibility on the grounds that the World Soul appears to be created. Thierry of Chartres (d. 1156) is a further near contemporary of both William of Conches and Peter Abelard. He is believed to have been the Chancellor of Chartres when Bernard of Clairvaux wrote his letter to Pope Innocent II about Peter Abelard (c. 1140). Thierry did not write a commentary directly on the *Timaeus*, but his commentaries on Boethius (c. 1150) and on the beginning of Genesis (after 1150) are in dialogue with the *Timaeus*.³⁴ They come after Peter

31 Mews and Marenbon both note that the translation is Calcidius' although the commentary is not directly cited, and Marenbon surmises that textual parallels suggest that it had Bernard's commentary. See Marenbon, "The Platonisms of Peter Abelard," 127; and Buytaert, *Petri Abaelardi Opera Theologica*, vol. 13, 47–48.

32 William of Conches, *Guillelmi de Conchis Glosae super Platonem*, ed. Édouard Jeuneau, CCCM 203 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006); Bernard of Chartres, *Glosae super Platonem*, vol. 107. While Paul Edward Dutton maintains Bernard's authorship, Richard William Southern has challenged this attribution. Regardless of the texts' actual authors, for ease of reference, I will refer to them as the Bernard and William commentaries. It is not important to discuss here whether the attributions of these texts are accurate, only that they are indeed two relatively separate and influential texts. See Richard William Southern, *Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe*, vol. 1: *Foundations* (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 1997), 81, n. 29; and Paul Edward Dutton, "The Uncovering of the *Glosae Super Platonem* of Bernard of Chartres," *Mediaeval Studies* 46 (1984), 105, 260–262. There is also the issue of their probable development as layered texts. See Peter Dronke, *A History of Twelfth-Century Western Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 14–17.

33 It may have been read and copied as late as ca. 1300 by the Oxford Dominican Nicholas Trivet (ca. 1257–ca. 1334), who remarks that there were many—even at his time—who wrote expositions of the work. See Raymond Klibansky, *The Continuity of the Platonic Tradition During the Middle Ages: With a New Preface and Four Supplementary Chapters; Together with, Plato's Parmenides in the Middle Ages and Renaissance: With a New Introductory Preface* (Milwood and New York: Kraus International Publications, 1984), 61, 66.

34 All works cited from Thierry of Chartres can be found in Thierry of Chartres, *Commentaries on Boethius by Thierry of Chartres and His School*, Studies and Texts 20, ed. Nikolaus M. Häring (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1971). Henceforth, the following abbreviations will be used for works to be found in this volume: *Hexaameron* for *Tractatus*

Abelard and his condemnation. Although Thierry also relates the Holy Spirit and the World Soul to the Spirit above the waters in Genesis in his *Hexaemeron* commentary, these writings receive no condemnation. Instead, they had a continued influence through their appropriation by Nicholas of Cusa in the fifteenth century.³⁵

The remainder of this essay will compare Peter Abelard with these thinkers on four issues: how the first triad relates to the Trinity, how the second triad relates to Creation, how both triads together relate the Trinity to Creation, and how certain members of these triads can be adequately spoken of, including the issue of *involucrum*. It has been suggested that Abelard's remarks about allegorical interpretation in the *Dial.* are aimed at older Platonists, but it is not at all clear who these older Platonists might have been. It will be clear that almost none of the major Platonist writers or texts in Abelard's time held the views that he condemns. Mews has identified Thierry of Chartres as the possible target of Abelard's remarks about allegorical exegesis.³⁶ It will be seen, however, that Thierry and Abelard actually agree on this issue.³⁷ And if the dating of the two texts is at all accurate, Thierry's texts postdate the *Dial.* by almost forty years. The first triad of God, Mind, and Soul was particularly appealing to patristic and medieval interpreters because it strongly resembled the first chapter of the Gospel of John. It is often referred to as the three hypostases. It was designed to reconcile what *Timaeus* 47e–48a says about the role of Intelligence in Creation with conceptions of Intelligence and Soul in *Phaedo* 97bc, *Laws* 10, 897cd and 12, 967bc, *Cratylus* 400a, and *Philebus* 30cd.³⁸ Calcidius and Macrobius are two conveyors of this traditional triad to twelfth-century readers although neither explicitly connect these with the Christian Trinity.³⁹

de sex dierum operibus, Commentum for Commentum super Boethii librum de Trinitate, and Glosa for Glosa super Boethii librum de Trinitate.

- 35 David Albertson, "A Learned Thief? Nicholas of Cusa and the Anonymous *Fundamentum Naturae*: Reassessing the Vorlage Theory," *Recherches de théologie et philosophie médiévales* 77, no. 2 (2010), 351–390; David Albertson, "'Our Boethius': Traditions of Thierry of Chartres and the Christology of Nicolaus Cusanus in *De Docta Ignorantia*," PhD diss. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2008).
- 36 Buytaert, *Petri Abaelardi Opera Theologica*, CCCM 13, 48.
- 37 And if the *HC* is referring to this Thierry (*Terricus*), this similarity is something that might be expected from someone who defended him when he was before a council.
- 38 Stephen Gersh, *Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism: The Latin Tradition*, 2 vols. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986) vol. 1, 254–255.
- 39 For an overview on and use of Macrobius, see Caiazza, *Lectures medievales de Macrobe* (Paris: Vrin, 2002), 27–85; and Édouard Jeuneau, "Macrobe, Source du Platonisme Chartrain," *Studi Medievali* 3, no. 1 (1960), 3–24.

In terms of twelfth-century Christian appropriations of this triad, Bernard of Chartres makes no attempt to deal with this first triad in a particularly sophisticated way, but William of Conches and Peter Abelard devote significant thought to this question.

William of Conches' *Glosae super Platonem*, which is a commentary on the *Timaeus*, explicitly connects the eternal Mind with the Word of God. This work follows Augustine's *Confessiones* 7, 9 by associating the *Nous* directly with the *Verbum Dei* and the eternal divine wisdom:⁴⁰

IN THE INTELLIGIBLE WORLD, that is, the archetype. WHICH IDEAS ARE HERE, that is, in the divine wisdom, THEY ARE LIVING CREATURES according to this passage: "What was made in him was Life", since the divine Wisdom lives, which comprehends all things.⁴¹

The oddly-punctuated 'QUOD FACTUM EST IN IPSO VITA ERAT' is a direct quotation from John 1. 3–4a that describes the pre-incarnate Christ as the Logos, making him both the Creator and the source of all life.⁴² The connection of Life with both the *Nous*, in the *Timaeus*, and with the Logos, in the Gospel of John, is one of the primary justifications for identifying the *Nous* as the Logos—both here and in patristic Logos theology. Tullio Gregory cites this passage in a footnote to support his point that the Archetype is identical with the Divine Mind, that is, the Son; however, the fact that the ideas are glossed

40 Tullio Gregory, *Anima Mundi: La Filosofia Di Guglielmo Di Conches e La Scuola Di Chartres* (Florence: Sansoni, 1955), 68–69; and J. M. Parent, *La Doctrine de la Création dans l'école de Chartres* (Paris: Vrin, 1938), 49. For more on the topic of the divine ideas in Augustine, see Augustine, *Questiones*, 46.

41 The small caps in the edition, and translated quotations here, represent the lemmata of the portion of the *Timaeus* that is being commented upon. *Glosae super Platonem*, 104.36–40, 188, 39e: 'IN INTELLIGIBILI MUNDO id est archetipo. QUE IDEAE ILLIC, id est divina sapientia, SUNT ANIMALIA secundum illud: 'Quod factum est in ipso vita erat,' quia vivit divina sapientia quae omnia comprehendit.'

42 Most readers of the Latin vulgate and English translations of scripture may be surprised by this punctuation. A period is normally placed after 'quod erat factum.' However, the oldest Greek and Latin manuscripts do not have this punctuation, and Eriugena's homily on John follows this tradition. In correspondence, Jarred Mercer of Oxford University has given me a short list of some *Vetus Latina Iohannes* manuscripts starting the paragraph with 'Quod.' See VL4, *Codex Veronensis*, folio 122r; VL6, *Codex Colbertinus*, folio 68r; VL34, *Pericope Cryptoferratensis*, 336; see also the placement of medial and high point punctuation markings in VL29, *Coda Sangermanensis Secundus*, folio 120r; and VL10, *Codex Brixianus*, folio 152r.

as being *in* the divine mind should not be ignored since it was this distinction that led his predecessor, Bernard of Chartres to argue that the archetype was inferior to the divine mind.

William's direct corollation of the *Nous* with the *Logos* does not extend to the World Soul and Holy Spirit. His position on the correct identity of the World Soul changes from an initial openness to an identity with the Holy Spirit to a final denial of this link on the grounds that the Holy Spirit's co-eternity with the Father and Son would be jeopardized.⁴³ In his earlier work, *Philosophia*, William identifies three possible opinions concerning the identity of the World Soul: 1. the divine goodness and will, which is the Holy Spirit, through which all things live that live in the world (*divina enim bonitate et voluntate quae Spiritus Sanctus est . . . omnia vivunt quae in mundo vivunt*); 2. a natural vigor put into things by God (*naturalem vigorem rebus a Deo insitum*) which allows them to live, have sensation, and discern; or 3. a certain incorporeal substance which is wholly in an individual body (*quamdam incorpoream substantiam quae tota est in singulis corporibus*), i.e. an individual soul.⁴⁴ In his commentary on the *Timaeus*, William is initially non-committal, noting that some say that the World Soul might be the Holy Spirit, but that "we in no way deny or affirm that" (*quod nec negamus modo nec affirmamus*).⁴⁵ Once he gets to *Timaeus* 34c, however, William firmly states that the world and the World Soul have a simultaneous (*simul*) origin, with the World Soul having priority only in terms of dignity (*dignitate*) not in quantity of time (*spatii quantitate*).⁴⁶ A World Soul that was made simultaneously with the world, even if it were higher in dignity, could not be the Holy Spirit. If the World Soul and the World have the same origin such that there was no time when the World existed without its Soul, the world's inferiority to God would also indicate its Soul's inferiority as well. The World Soul's age (*aevitas*) suggests a hierarchy of superior and inferior.

In book three of *De sex dierum operibus*, Thierry of Chartres makes a distinction between the Father being the efficient cause of Creation, the Son the formal cause, and the Holy Spirit the final cause. He appears, and is often thought by modern scholars, to make a direct corollation of the World Soul and the Holy Spirit in his commentary on the *Hexaemeron*, but a closer reading suggests that Thierry was referring only to one of the temporal missions of the

43 A more detailed discussion of the arguments for this progression can be found in: Gregory, *Anima Mundi*, 139–146.

44 *Philosophia*, 172.46 in PL 90:1130, cited in Gregory, *Anima Mundi*, 146.

45 William of Conches, *Glosae super Platonem*, 71.13–71.14, 124, 34b.

46 *Ibid.*, 73.1–73.11, 127, 34c.

Holy Spirit, relating to the creating and sustaining of the universe. When commenting on the Spirit of the Lord hovering over the waters, he says that this primarily means the power of God that rules so that matter may be informed and ordered. He then cites *Hermes Trismegistus* to explain how God informs and rules matter as a final cause, but he says that many philosophers give this power many names. Plato calling this spirit the World Soul is one instance of this naming (*Plato . . . spiritum mundi animam vocat*).⁴⁷ The Holy Spirit is the Christian name for the being that performs this function in the world.⁴⁸ The way in which Thierry couches this relationship in terms of the power of Creation is crucial for understanding what he means by saying that Plato calls this same thing the Holy Spirit. What he is making equivalent is a certain kind of creative and sustaining power, not necessarily the wholeness of the Holy Spirit. Although the *Hexaameron* commentary envisions the Holy Spirit as the agent that rules the informing of matter, a later commentary on Boethius' *De Trinitate* identifies the World Soul as enfolded necessity (*necessitas complexionis*) or Fate, a created intelligible thing.⁴⁹ This *necessitas complexionis* is an element of Thierry's metaphysical system that gets taken over by Nicholas of Cusa, and it may be that although he explored the idea of the Holy Spirit fulfilling that role in the world as Abelard thought before Thierry, he ultimately thought it safer to posit a created intelligible thing to fulfill that intermediary role between the divine ideas and informed matter.

In the *Theologia 'Summi Boni'*, Abelard briefly observes that the church fathers noticed how the Mind in Plato's philosophy was born from God and yet co-eternal with him. The fact that the first level of correspondence of the Mind and the Son is a commonplace allows him to focus on the relationship between the Holy Spirit with the World Soul, which clearly requires more explanation. Abelard contrasts pagan philosophies that recognized Trinitarian truths with Jewish failures to read the Creation story in Genesis properly enough to recognize the doctrine of the Trinity. Abelard presents the Platonic God-Mind-Soul triad as one example among many of pagan philosophers being given as much insight as the Hebrew prophets.

He begins the section on the testimony of the pagan prophets with an appeal to Paul in Romans 1:2.⁵⁰ Reason made it possible for them to know that there was one God, but many of the pagans were unfaithful to the revelation that they had been given through the natural world, just as many Jews were

47 Thierry of Chartres, *Hexaameron*, 3.27, 44.

48 Ibid., 3.27, 52.

49 Thierry of Chartres, *Glosa*, 2.21, 273.

50 *TBB*, 1.32.304–1.32.310, 97.

unfaithful to what they received from Moses and the prophets.⁵¹ God, however, chooses to use unfaithful and base things like asses to speak to his people so that he might be all the more glorified by the result.⁵² He also spoke through pagan philosophers such as Hermes and Plato, and one pagan prophet, the Sibyl. In addition to reason, philosophers, pagan prophets, and the Hebrew Scriptures, even before the written law and miracles God gave men of imitable virtue to the world, like Job and Socrates.⁵³ These witnesses to the truth strip pagan philosophers of all excuse for not receiving the Trinity, and they also explains why the belief in the Trinity was received by more pagans than Jews (and by the Greeks before the Latins).⁵⁴

Abelard's concept of reason is not identical to ones commonly held today because he emphasized that reason was a grace given and guided by the Holy Spirit. This reason allows the pagan to read the Book of Nature properly as he is guided by the Holy Spirit in its interpretation. Proper reading is key to proper understanding, and what distinguished Plato from Hermes is what books they had available to them. Abelard believed that Hermes was only able to get so far because he only had the Book of Nature, but Plato had both the Book of Nature and the books of Hebrew Scriptures. In fact, Plato may have also been a better reader of divine revelation than the Jews. Hermes came to an incomplete knowledge of the Father and Son through reasoning about Creation through a process of trial and error. At first, he also understood the second person of the Trinity as being in some sense the first Creation, and then, knowing that God was the Highest Good and therefore ultimately ineffable, arrived at a concept of this person as this very Lord's first born son and not a Creation. Abelard contrasts Hermes, whom he mentions briefly, with a long discourse of Plato, who seems to have known the whole Trinity through an encounter with the teaching of the Hebrew prophets:

Plato, that greatest of philosophers who, coming upon the testimony of the holy fathers of the Christian faith before other philosophers of the gentiles, clearly taught after the prophets the complete doctrine of the whole Trinity when he presented clearly that the Mind, which is called 'Nous', is born from God and co-eternal to him. That is, the Son, which we call Wisdom, was begotten from God the Father eternally.

51 Ibid., 1.33, 97–98.

52 Ibid., 1.34, 98.

53 Ibid., 1.65–1.70, 110–113; cf. also Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, CCL 47–48, 8.8.

54 *TSB*, 1.63, 110.

CONCERNING THE WORLD SOUL

Neither does he seem to overlook the person of the Holy Spirit since he added that the World Soul is the third person from God and the Nous.⁵⁵

Abelard appears to be alluding to *De civ. Dei* 8, 11 where Augustine writes that he used to think that Plato had met Jeremiah in Egypt but now he realizes the chronology does not match; nevertheless, a comparison of Moses' account in Genesis with the *Timaeus* suggests that Plato had either an oral or written translation of that work. It is this encounter that allows him to outshine Hermes Trismegistus. Like Hermes, Plato understood that the birth of the mind from God indicates that the Platonic Nous shares the same substance with God and is thus equal with Him.⁵⁶ Unlike Hermes, Plato was able to use his reason and the Hebrew Scriptures to have an intimation of the the Holy Spirit, which can be illustrated by his doctrine of the World Soul. This knowledge of the Holy Spirit was hidden in an *involucrum* like many of the most important doctrines.

Abelard admits that one of the most difficult aspects to integrate into his theory is the clear subordinationism of the World Soul in the Platonic text. On the surface of the text, it seems that the World Soul was made (*factum*) and had a beginning (*initium*) whereas the Catholic faith teaches that the three divine persons (*tres personas in divinitate*) are coequal and co-eternal (*coequales et coaeternas*).⁵⁷ Abelard's solution to this problem is to understand the World Soul to be a covering (*involucrum*) for the temporal mission of the Holy Spirit. The exact nature of how this works will be discussed in the final section.

The second Platonic triad available in the twelfth-century was the God-Archetype-Matter triad, otherwise known as the God-Form-Matter triad. This triad comes from the *Timaeus* although it is never clearly stated there.⁵⁸

55 Ibid., 1.5.36.349–1.5.36.357, 99: 'Ille maximus philosophorum Plato, qui testimonia sanctorum patrum prae caeteris gentium philosophis fidei christianae accedens, totius trinitatis summam post prophetas patenter edocuit, ubi uidelicet mentem, quam "noym" uocat, ex deo natum atque ipsi coaeternam esse perhibuit, id est filium, quem sapientiam dicimus, ex deo patre aeternaliter genitum. DE ANIMA MUNDI Qui nec spiritus sancti personam praetermisisse uidetur, cum animam mundi esse astruxerit tertiam a deo et noy personam.' His position does not change much in his *TC* 12.1.68–78, ed. Buytaert (1969a), 100–104.

56 *TSB* 3.2.55–3.2.57, 180–182; and 3.2.66, 185.

57 Ibid., 1.6.56, 106.

58 Roberto Plevano has observed that "it is generally accepted that Plato did not intend to conceive of the '*trinum genus*' of *Timaeus* 50c as cosmological or metaphysical principles of reality" even though this was the Neoplatonic and Christian interpretation of this

Timaeus speaks of a Demiurge or Artisan, often understood by medieval interpreters as a Creator, who arranges the world according to a Paradigm or Archetype (28a–29a; 39e). Physical objects are then constituted by Form, the Receptacle, and the nature coming from the union of the two (48e–49a, 50cd, and 52ab).⁵⁹ Stephen Gersh argues that the God-Form-Matter triad probably arose as a response to Aristotle's criticism that the theory of Forms only "accounted for the paradigmatic but not the efficient cause of things" by recasting the "original duality of Matter and Form" into a triad that had God as an efficient cause.⁶⁰ The triadic formula probably first arose in the Peripatetic schools and entered the doxological tradition from there. Calcidius mentions it in his commentary on the *Timaeus*, but it also appears in other ancient and patristic works.⁶¹ By the twelfth century, these three principles of God, Form, and Matter are found frequently in commentaries on Genesis and treatises on Creation, including Ambrose, Rabanus Maurus, Hugh of Saint Victor, Peter Comester, Peter Lombard, John of Salisbury, and Hugh of Champagne.⁶² The questions relating to this particular triad, that is the relationship of the Archetype (which Christians often call the divine ideas) to the combination of form and matter, known as entelecheia, are therefore very relevant to Abelard's

passage. Roberto Plevano, "Exemplarity and Essence in the Doctrine of the Divine Ideas: Some Observations on the Medieval Debate," *Medioevo* 25 (1999/2000), 689–690; Jean Pépin, *Théologie cosmique et théologie chrétienne (Ambroise, Exam I, 1–4)*, Bibliothèque de philosophie contemporaine, section: Histoire de la philosophie et philosophie générale (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1964), 21–25.

59 Stephen Gersh, *Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism: The Latin Tradition*, 2 vols. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), vol. 1, 238–246.

60 Ibid., vol. 1, 247.

61 Plato, *Timaeus a Calcidio translatus commentarioque instructus*, ed. J. H. Waszink, Plato Latinus 4 (London: Warburg Institute and Brill, 1975), chapter 307, and 308.14–309.2. For example, as *deus*, *material*, and *ideales formae* in works such as Martianus Capella's *De nuptiis* 7.733, as *caelum*, *terra*, *ideae*, in Augustine's critique of Varro's *Antiqu. Rer. Div.* fr. 206 in *De civitate Dei*, CCL 47–48, 7.28, as *deus*, *materia*, and *exemplum* in Irenaeus' *Adv. Haeres.* 2.14.3 and as *deus*, *materia*, *exemplar* in Ambrose's *Hexaem.* 1.1.1. For a more complete list, see Gersh, *Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism*, vol. 1, 244–245. See also H. Diels, *Doxographi Graeci* (Berlin: Weidman, 1929), 287–289, 567, 587, 591, and 653.

62 Gregory, *Anima Mundi*, 47–48. Ambrose, *Hexaameron*, CSEL 32, 1.1, trans. Fathers of the Church, vol. 42; Rabanus Maurus, *Com. in Gen.* 1.1, PL 107:443; Hugh of St Victor, *Ad notationes in Pent.*, *In Gen.*, 4, PL 175:33; Peter Comester, *Hist. scholastica*, *Gen.*, CCCM 191, 1; Peter Lombard, *Sententiae in Magistri Petri Lombardi* and for the translation see Peter Lombard, *Sententiae*, trans. Giulio Silano (Toronto: PIMS, 2008), 2d.1.1; and Hugh of Champagne, *Tract. in Hexaem.* 1.10, PL 192:1251. The latter author describes these principles as co-eternal, which is not an orthodox position.

theory of universals because form in matter and in the human mind cannot be properly understood without reference to form in the divine Mind.

Although this God-Form-Matter triad was attractive because it depicts God as efficient cause, seemingly making it compatible with the idea of a Creator God, and although it concerns the relationship between the Archetype and Form in Matter, it was open to attack from numerous patristic and medieval Christian apologists because of its perceived incompatibility with Creation *ex nihilo* since it seems to imply three preexistent principles. Against this concern, the twelfth-century author, John of Salisbury insists that the belief that matter and form are co-eternal with God is merely the position of the Stoics whereas Boethius and Bernard of Chartres understood Plato's triad of God, matter, and ideas to consist of one 'absolutely immutable' principle, which is God, and two principles that are only immutable in their own way (*Metalogicon* 4, 35).⁶³ According to John these principles should be considered only somewhat immutable because:

They differ from one another in effects. Forms, coming into matter, arrange it, and make it subject in a way to change. Forms themselves are also to some extent modified by contact with matter, and, as Boethius observes in his *Arithmetic*, are transformed into changeable instability. Nevertheless, he denies that ideas, which are first essences placed after God, are mingled in themselves with this matter or are distributed according to any motion, but from these, native forms proceed, namely the images of their exemplars, which nature created by singular things. In his book *On the Trinity*, Boethius[says], 'From forms which are above matter, come those forms which are in matter and cause bodies.'⁶⁴

If the Boethian view is upheld, then the divine ideas are less mutable than matter once form and matter compose bodies because somehow once form

⁶³ John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon*.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.35.26–4.36.173: 'Sed in effectibus abinuicem uariantur. Materiam quippe aduenientes formae disponunt et quodam modo motui reddunt obnoxiam, et item formae materiei contactu quadam ratione uariantur, et ut ait Boetius in arismetis in uertibilem transeunt inconstantiam. Ideas tamen quas post Deum primas essentias ponit, negat in se ipsis materiae admisceri, aut aliquem sortiri motum. Sed ex his formae prodeunt natiuae, scilicet imagines exemplarium, quas natura rebus singulis concreauit. Hinc in libro de Trinitate Boetius. Ex his formis quae praeter materiam sunt illae formae uenerunt quae in materia sunt, et corpus efficiunt.'

enters matter, it is modified by it. John of Salisbury says Bernard of Chartres, the 'foremost Platonist' of his time, held the Boethian view.

If one associates the Archetype with the Trinity, a further question is raised concerning the relationship of the Trinitarian persons with the Archetype. Tullio Gregory has generalized that twelfth-century Christians habitually obfuscated the distinctions between the *Nous* and the Archetype because this was the 'typical' Christian position. He writes that:

with the reduction of the world of ideas into the formal cause of creation, it ought then to be identified with the Wisdom of God. The ideas become the eternal thought of creation; this, if it is common to all of Christian thought, is not directly Platonic. It is certainly not in the text of the *Timaeus*.⁶⁵

While this may be true to a certain extent, Tullio Gregory's comment neglects the fact that Demiurge and archetype are often identified with each other in the pre-Christian Academic tradition.⁶⁶ Several other identifications are also possible: the archetype could be an eternally created thing or an eternal procession from the Mind, like the Holy Spirit.

Bernard of Chartres makes a Creator-creature distinction between the archetype and the persons of the Trinity, saying that the ideas are eternal but the divine persons are co-eternal. In addition to the report of John of Salisbury cited above, this distinction can also be found in Bernard's commentary where he writes that the Archetype is distinct, although clearly inferior to the divine Mind:

65 Gregory, *Anima mundi*, 69: 'Con la riduzione del mondo delle idee a causa formale del creato, cioè identificandolo con la Sapienza di Dio, le idee divengono il pensiero eterno del creatore; questo, se è comune a tutti i teologi cristiani anche non dichiaratamente Platonici, non è certo nel testo del Timeo.'

66 This idea can be found in Augustine, *De libero arbitrio*, trans. Peter King, CCL 29 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 2.16.44–2.17.46, 267–268; Augustine, *De vera religione*, 3.3, 188–190; *ibid.*, 11.21, 200–201; *ibid.*, 18.35–18.36, 208–209; *ibid.*, 31.58, 225–226; *ibid.*, 36.66, 230–231; and *ibid.*, 43.81–44.82, 241, as well as in question 46 on divine ideas in Augustine, *De diversis quaestionibus*. Influenced by both Augustine and Porphyry (the latter has a view very close to this one although not quite), Boethius expresses this view in *De inst. arithm.*, *De Trin.*, and *Cons.* Cf. Gersh, *Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism*, vol. 2, 689–690. For the pre-Christian move in this direction in the writings of Seneca and Antiochus, possibly motivated by Stoic concerns, see A. H. Armstrong, *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 55; and Plevano, "Exemplarity and Essence," 678–679.

Note that the archetype does not have beginning or end, and nevertheless, according to the philosophers, it was different from and inferior to God. It is different since it gathers in itself the ideas of all things. These ideas are one of the three things considered principles by Plato, namely: the one God (who is the Creator of all things), the Ideas of other things (that is, the original forms of all things, which are never mixed with creatures), and Hyle (namely, the matter of [physical] bodies). It [the archetype] is inferior, since Macrobius says that the ideas are in the Mind of God, for which reason this [world of ideas] is inferior.⁶⁷

In this passage, he synthesizes the God-Form-Matter triad with the God-Mind-Soul triad by means of an appeal to Macrobius, who places the ideas in the Mind of God. His use of Macrobius is still not very sophisticated. Unlike other twelfth-century authors who might have attacked the God-Form-Matter triad for implying that the three are co-eternal, Bernard is able to take these 'principles' as being unequal on the authority of another pagan Platonist, Macrobius. The Archetype is 'Form' in that triad, and it is inferior to (and therefore different from) the Divine Mind.

Bernard also connects this created archetype with the World Soul. The importance of this distinction has not been generally recognized because it is assumed in modern scholarship on twelfth-century thought that the Archetype is merely another name for the Divine Mind. Instead of arguing that the World Soul is an *involutrum* of the Holy Spirit, Bernard argues that the Soul's composition is a covering (*integumentum*) or wrapping (*involutrum*) for discussing the presence of forms in the world, by which he means Aristotelian powers and potentialities.⁶⁸ Bernard of Chartres follows Aristotle's definition of the soul that says that it is both the living motion (*vitalem motum*) of things and an "...entelechia, that is, the form of a body, which informs a body in a certain way by vivification."⁶⁹ This notion of soul is the foundation of his metaphysical theory. Forms thus exist on multiple levels: 1. the divine ideas contemplated

67 Bernard of Chartres, *Glosae super Platonem*, 4.230–4.239, 166, 31b: 'Nota archetipus nec principium nec finem habere, et tamen secundum philosophos diversum esse a deo et inferiorem. Diversus est quia colligit in se omnium rerum ideas, quae sunt unum de tribus principiis a Platone consideratis: est quippe unum deus, omnium opifex, alterum ideae, id est originales formae omnium quae numquam admiscuntur creaturis, tertium hyle, materia scilicet corporum. Inferior est, cum Macrobius dicat ideas esse in mente dei, quae inferior est.'

68 Ibid., 5.34, 174 and 5.50, 175.

69 Ibid., 5.2, 173; 5.73–5.74, 175: 'entelichia, id est forma corporis, quae corpus vivificando quodammodo informat.'

as a unity by God and his mind, 2. the division of Matter and native forms (also known as ideas), 3. genera and species in universals, 4. the properties of accidents, and 5. the mixture of things in individuals.⁷⁰ Bernard argues that Calcidius says that Plato understood the divine substance through the contemplation of individual substance.⁷¹ Although he connects these forms with the divine ideas, Bernard is careful to say that while this Soul is born in a way similar to the begetting of the Archetype and precedes the body, it is not co-eternal with the Son and is therefore inferior.⁷² The doctrine of World Soul should also not be read as implying that human souls fall into human bodies.⁷³ Soul is, however, a *simulacrum* of immortal divinity and the foundation for time being made in the image of eternity.⁷⁴ As such, humans can use the quadrivial arts (geometry, astronomy, music, and arithmetic) to understand the divine nature in the proportion perceivable through intelligible form in the world. This intelligible form was referred to as Soul by Plato, and these intelligible forms relate to the image of Eternity in the world, even though the sensible world is by nature not equal with eternity.⁷⁵

William of Conches, on the other hand, considers the Archetype to be eternal and therefore identical with Divine Wisdom in the way that Tullio Gregory identified as more traditional. Like Bernard, however, he distinguishes the lower-order immortality of the World Soul from the Eternity of the Archetype:

SED ANIMAL, ETC. The sensible world is called a living being (*animal*). Since it is also said above that the archetypal world is called a living being (*animal*), here then is shown the kind of difference between them: because the Archetype is eternal and the sensible world is temporal. Eternity is a mode of all things existing presently, which are and were and will be; this name applies only to God. Thus, the archetypal world, who is the divine Wisdom, deserves to be called eternal.⁷⁶

70 Ibid., 5.44–5.48, 174–175.

71 Ibid., 5.58–5.59, 175.

72 Ibid., 4.375–4.379, 171; 5.25–5.28, 174.

73 Ibid., 5.28–5.29, 174.

74 Ibid., 5.269–5.279, 183.

75 Ibid., 5.275–5.278, 183.

76 William of Conches, *Glosae super Platonem*, 94.21–94.26, 37d, 166: ‘SED ANIMAL, ETC. Dixerat mundum sensibilem esse animal. Quia et superius mundum archetipus dixerat animal, ideo hic ostendit eorum differentiam talem quod archetipus aeternus est, sensibilis temporalis. Et est aeternitas praesentarius status omnium quae sunt et fuerunt et futura sunt; quod soli Deo convenit. Unde merito archetipus mundus, qui est divina sapientia dicitur aeternus.’

The primary difference between the Archetype and the World Soul is that one is eternal and the other temporal. William comments that when Plato writes that the Soul was made 'immortal and sempiternal' (*immortalis et sempiterna*), he says this "to distinguish it from the archetype" (*ad differentiam archetipi*). This archetype, as he had also noted earlier, was eternal. The sensible world is called a 'living creature' (*animal*) "because it is in perpetual motion" (*quia est in perpetuo motu*) and 'immortal' (*immortale*) "because it lacks an end" (*quia caret fine*) but since it has a beginning, it is not eternal.⁷⁷ The Archetype is the same as the Divine Wisdom, and when either are called eternal, this description implies true divinity, separating all that hold this appellation from created things. Since William thinks the World Soul is temporal, it must be created and cannot be identical with the Archetype.

How should we interpret the position of Peter Abelard within this debate? Most scholarship has focused on the relationship of the World Soul and the Holy Spirit in his thought, but the role of the Archetype in Abelard's theology of the Holy Spirit has been generally overlooked, even though it is crucial for his understanding of Platonic theology and the theory of universals. Abelard introduces the Archetype when discussing how Plato had an intimation of the *filioque* clause, that is, the Western Christian belief that the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from both the Father and the Son. This is to be contrasted with the Eastern Christian belief that the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from just the Father. Abelard thinks that Hilary of Poitiers's formulation that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son might be a possible way to reconcile the Eastern and Western views of this doctrine.⁷⁸

He explains the relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in terms of Form and the process of Creation and providence. The divine ideas in the Mind of God are evidence that Plato knew that the Spirit "also proceeds directly from the Son" (*ex filio quoque recte procedere*), and not just the Father.⁷⁹ The Son is related to the Spirit in the same way that a Mind is related to an Archetype or Form. The one Form that effects all other forms proceeds from the Mind, which flows from the Father. This Form conveys "the law of divine Providence to the effect of Benevolence" (*ratio divinae providentiae ad effectum benignitatis*), which inside the mind of God "foresees making things from eternity" (*ab aeterno faciendum providerit*) and "makes things happen

77 Ibid., 94.18–94.20, 37d, 166.

78 Abelard inserts this argument about Hilary of Poitiers into *TSch*, 13.2.165, 488–489 and *TC*, 12.4.136, ed. Buytaert (1969a), 334. It is not present in *TSB*.

79 *TSB*, 3.3.91, 197.

temporally when he wills" (*temporaliter quando vult facit*).⁸⁰ One finds an analogous move in *Metalogicon*, 4.31, where John of Salisbury suggests that although Providence is one Idea, the necessary laws are many, which can sometimes make it difficult to see that the so called "divine ideas" are in fact one Idea with many causes. In both John of Salisbury and Peter Abelard, the Archetype flows through the Divine Mind from the Father, but Abelard is suggesting a separation of Archetype and Mind. The Holy Spirit is the Archetype that proceeds from the Mind, which then informs the world. Thus, considered in one way, the Holy Spirit is one eternal Idea with many temporal effects.

This Trinitarian gift of Form to the world is an act of love, which is a concept that Abelard and many of his predecessors associated with the benevolence of the Holy Spirit. Peter Abelard, Thierry of Chartres, and Richard of Saint Victor all assign the term benevolence to the Holy Spirit, connecting it with Augustine's *De Trinitate*, 14.6.8, which says that the Holy Spirit is the Love uniting the Father and the Son.⁸¹ This inner love then becomes the foundation for the love perceived by Creation as benevolence, creating a parallel between the eternal nature and temporal effects of the Spirit. This connection of Benevolence with the World Soul is not found in Calcidius, who prefers the term Fate, even though he does connect the Divine Mind and Providence in chapters 176 and 188 of his commentary. That is not to say, however, there are no secular precedents for connecting the Form and the informing of matter with the communication of divine Love. An example of a possible secular precedent available in the twelfth century will be seen when we get to William of Conches' interpretation of the two births of Hymanaeus. Thus, the association of the Holy Spirit with the World Soul by Abelard is an example of both the communication of Form and of Love. God the Father begets the Mind, which produces the Archetype by which the world is created. This whole process reveals both Love within the Trinitarian persons and communicated love from the Trinitarian person to Creation by means of the Holy Spirit.

Abelard does not think Plato intended to describe the Holy Spirit in its co-eternal aspect when he spoke of the World Soul; rather, he was merely showing its vivifying and grace-giving functions in the world.⁸² The Archetype is the Holy Spirit in Eternity, and the World Soul is the Holy Spirit in Time. Abelard writes that Plato did not err by saying that the World Soul had a beginning and was not co-eternal with the Father and the Son because he was speaking of the

80 Ibid., 3.3.92, 197–198.

81 Thierry of Chartres, *Commentum*, 2.38, 80; Richard of St Victor, *De Trinitate*, 3.4.17–3.4.20, 139.

82 *TSB*, 3.4.94–3.4.99, 198–200.

effects of the Holy Spirit, like the giving of grace, life, and virtue.⁸³ These effects have a beginning in time because creatures have a beginning in time.

The philosophical significance of the Holy Spirit's role as both Archetype and World Soul in Abelard's thought should not be ignored although it can only be touched upon here. The World Soul plays a major role in Platonic metaphysics as the communicator or medium of life, unity, and form to the world. Augustine's metaphysic has three primary minds containing different kinds of forms: the divine mind, the angelic minds, and the human.⁸⁴ He plays with incorporating the World Soul into this system, but uncomfortable connecting it with human soul, he eliminates it from his 'system.' Things like 'Time' must now be perceived primarily by human souls rather than residing in a World Soul.⁸⁵ By reincorporating the World Soul as the temporal effects of the Holy Spirit, Abelard eliminates the need for angelic observers of divine ideas and form in matter.

Although he rejects Augustine's use of angels, Abelard looks to *De civitate Dei* 10, 2 to explain the relationship of the Mind and World Soul of Plato with human souls. He does this in terms of the 'light' discussed in the Gospel of John 1. The World Soul was 'created' by the same intelligible Light that lights us. He also makes a further analogy, based upon John 1, that suggests that the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the World Soul might be compared to the relationship between the Word and the Incarnate Christ.⁸⁶ Abelard compares the World Soul's temporal beginning with the fact that Christ was born temporally according to his humanity even though he was always born eternally according to his divinity.⁸⁷

The form-giving and understanding-giving functions of the Holy Spirit are clearly fundamental to Abelard's metaphysical model, and the effects of these concepts on his theory of universals should be more thoroughly investigated.

83 Ibid., 3.4.94, 198.

84 For human minds, see Tod Breyfogle, "Intellectus," in *Augustine through the Ages Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999); and Wayne Hankey, "Mind," in *Augustine through the Ages Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999). For more on the role of angels in Augustine see *De Genesi ad litteram*, 4.24, and Frederick Van Fleteren, "Angels," in *Augustine through the Ages Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 20–24.

85 There is some disagreement about when Augustine gave up on the idea of a World Soul, but even Roland Teske, who thinks Augustine held onto the idea, also thinks that he is uncomfortable with it for a long time. See Roland Teske, *Paradoxes of Time in Saint Augustine* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1996).

86 *TSB*, 3.4.99, 200.

87 Ibid., 3.4.95, 198–199.

The Christian emphasis upon Benevolence, however, makes this Spirit not only the informer of the world but the dispenser of divine love and grace. As it dwells in human minds, the Holy Spirit is more than the illuminator of human thoughts concerning forms. It is more than the giver of cognitive ability. Among the many graces of the Holy Spirit is the enabling of the human mind to perceive the truth that God is the 'Highest Good,' even when the fullness of this truth requires Christian conversion to be fully comprehended. This is a clear form of Augustinian divine illumination theory, which is the condition for the possibility that Christians and Platonists can both seek the Highest Good.⁸⁸

The Holy Spirit, as divine illuminator, also makes it possible to perceive the mystery that lies behind a 'covering' (*involucrum*), even an *involucrum* of its own person. When Abelard argues that the World Soul depicts the Holy Spirit in its divine mission as the immanent divine principle in Creation, he writes "this wrapping is beautiful, since the love of God, which we called the Holy Spirit is infused into human hearts through faith or at first through the gift of reason."⁸⁹ Abelard then goes on to praise Plato because he "beautifully depicts the grace of God given to all freely" (*pulchre designat gratiam dei omnibus communiter oblatam*).⁹⁰ The fittingness of a beautiful covering for the great truth of God's immanence in Creation through the Holy Spirit suggests that Plato did indeed have in mind such a truth all along because this is a common way of speaking among philosophers.⁹¹ In addition to the argument from beauty, Abelard uses ridicule to point out that Plato could not have meant that plants or trees have the same amount or kind of life as humans because "it is clear that plants are insensible" (*plantas insensibiles esse constat*) or other clearly false things.⁹² Since Plato was one of the wisest of philosophers, it should be reasonable to assume that he was covering the truth of the Trinity with a veil.

This divine illumination is necessary because at the root of the nature of an *involucrum* is hiddenness. He appeals to Augustine's *De doctrina christiana* 2.6.7, which says that certain truths were covered lest they be dishonored (*teguntur ne vilescant*).⁹³ Abelard uses *involucrum* interchangeably with

88 For an overview of various historical versions of this doctrine, see Ronald H. Nash, "Illumination, Divine," in *Augustine through the Ages Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 438–440.

89 *TSB*, 1.6.46.483–1.6.46.485, 103: 'Pulchrum est involucrum, quia caritas dei, quam spiritum sanctum diximus, cordibus humanis per fidei sive rationis donum primitus infusa.'

90 *Ibid.*, 1.6.47.491–1.6.47.492, 103.

91 *Ibid.*, 1.5.38, 99.

92 *Ibid.*, 1.5.43, 102.

93 *Ibid.*, 1.5.38, 99.

William's preferred term of 'covering' (*integumentum*), which meant both "a fable that covers hidden meanings (especially moral and cosmological ones)" and "the hidden meanings of the fable themselves."⁹⁴ In this way, it would be appropriate to say that the World Soul is the Holy Spirit in so far as that is the meaning of the fable but that it is not the Holy Spirit in so far as it is a fable. Abelard cites Augustine's *De Doctrina christiana* 1, 2 and multiple scripture passages to show that God and the wise love to hide mysteries in foolish or obscure things.⁹⁵

Dronke thinks that Abelard preferred Augustine's term, 'covering' (*involucrum*) to Macrobius' veil of fictions (*velamen figmentorum*) and fables (*fabulosa*) or William of Conches' wrapping (*integumentum*)—even though Abelard uses all of these at various times. Most ancient and patristic authors besides Augustine understand *involucrum* to have negative connotations, but Augustine frequently speaks highly of it. Dronke argues that the most significant usage for Abelard is *Ennarrationes in Psalmos*, 126, 11, where Augustine talks about things being said darkly in order to generate multiple meanings.⁹⁶ There he also describes the prophet Isaiah as removing the veils of language (*velamenes nominum*) and seeing hidden mysteries. If it were not for the Holy Spirit's grace, it would not be possible to get to the kernel of truth that is covered by fictions.

Bernard of Clairvaux may have dismissed Abelard's interest in the World Soul as if it were a kind of children's tale, but Abelard says that even the tales of the Biblical prophets were once regarded as fables (*quasi fabulosa*) because

94 This is based on William's unedited commentary on Macrobius. Peter Dronke's work gives many excerpts with translation. See Peter Dronke, *Fabula: Explorations into the Uses of Myth in Medieval Platonism*, *Mittellateinische Studien und Texte* 9 (Leiden and Cologne: Brill, 1985), 25. Further sources include Helen E. Rodnite, "The Doctrine of the Trinity in Guillaume De Conches Glosses: Texts and Studies" (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972); Martin Grabmann, *Handschriftliche Forschungen und Mitteilungen zum Schrifttum des Wilhelm von Conches und zu Bearbeitungen Seiner Naturwissenschaftlichen Werke*, *Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Abteilung* 10 (Munich: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1935); Édouard Jauneau, "Gloses de Guillaume de Conches sur Macrobe: Note sur les manuscrits," *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Âge* 35 (1960), 17–28; and Édouard Jauneau, "La lecture des auteurs classiques à l'école de Chartres durant la première moitié du XII^e siècle," in *Classical Influences on European Culture A.D. 500–1500*, ed. R. R. Bolgar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1971), 95–102.

95 *TSB*, 1.5.38–1.5.40, 100–101. See also Psalms 17:12; Exodus 20:21; 2 Chronicles 6:1; Proverbs 25:2; and Proverbs 1:6.

96 Dronke, *Fabula*, 56–57, n. 2.

they seemed utterly useless according to the surface of the letter (*secundam litterae superficiem*) until people turned their attention from their style to their meaning.⁹⁷ In his defense of the utility of what appears to be a useless fable, Abelard resembles his contemporary William of Conches, who defends the kind of tales written for entertainment against Macrobius' condemnation that they are 'children's nurseries' (*cunas nutricum*). William writes that children's nurseries are the schools of the poets and the literary authors are entertainments that foster growth towards Wisdom.⁹⁸

William's systematic divisions of different types of 'exhorting' (*adhortationis*) fables are also helpful in understanding why Abelard thinks that the most beautiful form of a wrapping (*pulcherrimam involucri figuram*) has some relevance to its Truth value.⁹⁹ Interpreting and revising Macrobius in order to allow for the philosophical utility of more kinds of fable, William writes that there are two kinds of fable that contains 'true matter' (*argumentum veri*)—those "containing unworthy elements" that communicate through baseness (*per turpia*) and those "containing seemly things only" that communicate under the cover of a pious veil (*sub pio velamine*).¹⁰⁰ When Abelard cites Macrobius as a further authority testifying to the hiding of truths, he cites the very passage where Macrobius says that the only kind of fiction (*solum figmenti genus*) that is appropriate for divine things is that which is "under a pious veil of fiction" (*sub pio figmentorum velamine*).¹⁰¹ Thus, Abelard is obligated to argue for the beauty of the veil of the World Soul if he is to make a solid case for it referring to such a high mystery as the Holy Spirit. The beauty of the veil consists in the way it depicts God's grace bestowing benevolence on all created things.

In following Macrobian hermeneutical principles for understanding expressions of divine things, Abelard must navigate one further thing: the strictures concerning symbol and fable. According to Macrobius, the highest things are most appropriately described by symbol, which is more unified and therefore eternal. Only lesser things can be discussed by fable, which has a narrative structure that implies temporality. Abelard cites most of Macrobius' passage below verbatim to support this idea:

97 TSB, 1.5.38, 99.

98 Macrobius, *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis*, 1.2.8 and selections from William of Conches' unpublished commentary on this part of the work that are found in Dronke, *Fabula*, 17–18 and 68–69.

99 TSB, 1.5.37.364, 99.

100 The Latin is from schematic of Macrobius, *Commentarii*, 1.1.2.7–1.1.2.11 that Dronke gives in *Fabula*, 26, n. 1. Dronke gives a much longer exposition of William's entire exposition in *Fabula*, 15–32.

101 TSB, 1.5.41, 100; cf. Macrobius, *Commentarii*, 1.1.2.11.

When [human] reflection dares to raise itself to the highest and principle of all gods—who is called The Good (*tagathan*) and First Cause (*proton aition*) by the Greeks—or to the Mind born and sprung from the highest God—which the Greeks call *Nous*, containing the original forms of things, which are called 'ideas' [...] when, so to speak, they talk about these things—the highest God and the Mind, they do not touch at all upon fable. But if they try to ascribe anything to those that surpass not only human . . . speech but also human understanding, they flee to similitudes and examples. So when courageous Plato spoke about the Good (*tagathan*), he would not dare to say what it was, knowing only this about it: that it was not possible for a man to know 'what kind' it was. But he found the sun to be the only visible likeness to it. And through this similitude, he showed a way of speaking by which he raised himself to that which he could not fully grasp. Similarly, antiquity directed that no likeness (*simulacrum*) for Him be made as was done for the other gods. Since the highest God (*summus deus*), just as the Mind that was born from Him, are both above Soul (*ultra animam*)—and thus above nature (*supra . . . naturam*)—therefore, it is not fitting to approach them with fables.¹⁰²

The decision to use either unified Symbol or narrative Fable roughly corresponds to the divide between the intelligible and sensible world. If one follows Abelard's connection of the Holy Spirit with the divine ideas, then the Platonic philosophers like Macrobius are preserving the co-eternity of the Father,

102 Translation from the Latin (the text is available in both French and Latin). See Macrobius, *Commentaire au Songe de Scipion/ Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis*, book 1, Collection des universités de France (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2001), 1.2.14.22–1.2.15.13, 9: 'Cum ad summum et principem omnium deum, qui apud Graecos τὰγαθὸν qui πρῶτον αἴτιον nuncupatur, tractatus se audet attollere, vel ad mentem, quem Graeci νοῦν appellant, originales rerum species quae ἰδέαι dictae sunt, continentem, ex summo natam et profectam deo: cum de his inquam loquuntur summo deo et mente, nihil fabulosum penitus attingunt, sed siquid de his adsignare conantur quae non sermonem tantum modo sed cogitationem quoque humanam superant, ad similitudines et exempla confugiunt. sic Plato cum de τὰγαθῷ loqui esset animatus, dicere quid sit non ausus est, hoc solum de eo sciens, quod sciri quale sit ab homine non possit, solum vero ei simillimum de visibilibus solem repperit, et per eius similitudinem viam sermoni suo attolendi se ad non comprehendenda patefecit. ideo et nullum ei simulacrum, cum dis aliis constituerentur, fixit antiquitas, quia summus deus nataque ex eo mens sicut ultra animam ita supra naturam sunt, quo nihil fas est de fabulis pervenire.'

Son, and Spirit by considering all of them to be worthy of depiction by symbols instead of fables. The World Soul is an odd case because it is scattered throughout all things and yet remains a unity like eternal things. According to Macrobius, it is a place where fable is applied because it is acting temporally in the world, but how is this possible if the World Soul is in fact an eternal thing like the Holy Spirit?

Abelard navigates this hermeneutic quagmire by creating a parallel between the eternal and temporal procession of the Holy Spirit with the eternal and temporal birth of the Son as described by William of Conches. When discussing this parallel, Abelard writes:

Just as therefore Christ began to be according to his humanity, but according to his divinity we say he is eternal, so also the Holy Spirit is eternal according to the subsistence of his essence, but we say that he began to be according to effects.¹⁰³

Although he does not use the eternal/temporal distinction to discuss the Holy Spirit, William of Conches also distinguishes two births of the Son—one eternally in the Godhead and one temporally in the Incarnation.¹⁰⁴ The second nativity makes it possible to depict the divine by means of ‘images’ (*simulacra*) that were once reserved only for temporal things.¹⁰⁵ William based these two nativities upon the philosophical interpretation of the two births of Hymenaeus from Cypris and from Bacchus as the Christian Hymenaeus, which is the love that binds together the Trinity, and Bacchus as the World Soul, “which is the Spirit of the Lord that filled the universe and generated divine love in each thing.”¹⁰⁶ This myth helps to connection the birth and

103 *TSB*, 3.4.95, 198–199: ‘Sicut ergo Christum secundum humanitatem incepisse, secundum uero diuinitatem aeternum esse predicamus, ita et spiritum sanctum secundum subsistentiam essentiae suae aeternum, secundum effecta uero incepisse dicamus.’

104 Augustine, by contrast, emphasizes the immanence of the Holy Spirit after Pentacost, but this may be seen as a different kind of presence than what was given at Creation. See Eugene TeSelle, “Holy Spirit,” in *Augustine Through the Ages Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 435.

105 Dronke, *Fabula*, 36 and for the selections from William’s unpublished commentary see *ibid.*, 74.

106 Assuming that the author of the Florentine commentary on Martianus Capella is William of Conches as Dronke believes. See *ibid.*, 102, and 104–105. Dronke notes the similarity with Abelard but not in terms of an inspiration for two births. He also notes some important differences because the World Soul in this commentary is the Spirit as principle not as manifestation, which is Abelard’s position.

transmission of Form with the divine enjoyment and conveyance of Love. For both William of Conches and Peter Abelard, and as was seen earlier, for many of their predecessors, Divine Providence and Benevolence are inseparable: the informing of matter is motivated by divine Love, which exists internally in the Godhead and is then conveyed to the Creation by the Holy Spirit.

Abelard's belief that Plato knew about the Trinity is not an example of natural reason apart from grace attaining to Christian mystery. Rather, it is an example of reason given by the grace of the Holy Spirit helping someone to rightly interpret the Hebrew Scriptures. His use of Macrobian hermeneutics also shows that Abelard's reading of Plato is not an outright example of allegorical euhemerism because he is carefully using principles laid down by one pagan Platonist in order to read another pagan Platonist. He is not trying to cover an ugly story with beautiful truths like the Trinity in order to make it more palatable to Christian tastes. Rather, he affirms the beauty of the veil, which was carefully constructed by someone who knew it would be covering the mystery of an even greater Truth. Human minds can only peek behind this veil by the gifts of the Holy Spirit working in the temporal world at first through reason and then through faith. It may be that one of the attractions to using a word like *involutum* to describe the World Soul, in alignment with its Augustinian usage, is that it gets at the multiplicity of gifts that are conveyed by this one Soul. As a temporal conveyer of the Archetypal divine ideas, it informs matter and gives human minds the ability to attain knowledge of these forms through images of the ideas and the imperfection of human concepts that are based upon these images. As generated from the Son, the World Soul and the human soul both receive their life from the Father through the Son. Just as it is the Love that binds the Father and Son, it is the Love that communicates grace from God to Creation.

In conclusion, none of the major Platonic texts of Abelard's day contain the view that he ridicules in the *Dial.* Abelard's remark appears to be aimed at an over-eager student flirting with Platonism's relationship with Christianity rather than at a serious Christian Platonist. Calcidius does not try to relate the Platonic triads with the Christian Trinity, and while Bernard of Chartres expresses interest in the God-Form-Matter triad, he tends to ignore issues of the World Soul and the Holy Spirit. He focuses instead upon the relationship of the divine ideas to the divine Mind, insisting that the former are eternal but not co-eternal with latter. The closest he gets is his argument that the World Soul and Archetype are *involutum* for parallel, but unequal, informers of the sensible world. William of Conches identifies the Mind with the Archetype and waffles on whether the World Soul might be the Holy Spirit. He argues the Incarnation making it possible to create physical likenesses (*simulacra*)

of God. Thierry of Chartres is probably the closest to Abelard view, at least in his commentary on the *Hexaemeron*, where he says that the Spirit brooding over the waters concerns God's rule of the informing of matter as a final cause. This immanent rule is given many names including World Soul and Holy Spirit. Presumably, the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the World Soul is not transitive in that its functions cannot be reduced to its operations as final cause.

Although Abelard is often seen as an opponent of Augustinian metaphysics, most of his arguments in the *Theologia 'Summi Boni'* are more Augustinian than not. Although he does not always cite it directly, there are multiple clear parallels and borrowings between Abelard's work and *De civitate Dei*, especially books 8, 10, and 11. It may be that we have overlooked these parallels by relying too heavily upon Abelard's unusual tendency for his century to cite authorities directly. The title of the work signals Augustine's praise of the Platonists for their pursuit of God as the Highest Good, and the first line of the work affirms Augustine's biggest criticism of the Platonist in that they do not receive the fullness of revelation that is found in the Incarnation. Both Augustine and Abelard read Genesis and the *Timaeus* side by side through the lens of the Gospel of John 1. Both emphasize the role of the Holy Spirit in giving the grace of illumined reason, a modification of one metaphysical function of the World Soul. Both expect to see the highest, most mysterious things hid beneath a covering (*involutum*) so that they may be sought more eagerly by those who desire to know. And both emphasize the moral virtue of certain ancient people like Socrates.

Abelard's reintroduction of the World Soul is, however, a major revision of Augustinian belief that has metaphysical consequences. Augustine held an agnostic view of the World Soul later in life.¹⁰⁷ He also modified many functions of the Archetype and World Soul by replacing them with various other entities: the divine ideas in the Divine Mind, the Holy Spirit illumining thoughts, Time being found in the human mind, the Mind creating all things at once—some entirely and some in seminal reasons—and angels watching this Creation of forms and then being involved in their operation in time.¹⁰⁸ The list could probably be expanded. Abelard's solution is simpler and incorporates Augustine's

107 Roland Teske, "Soul," in *Augustine through the Ages Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 811.

108 Michael John McKeough, "The Meaning of the Rationes Seminales in St Augustine," PhD diss. (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1926); Veronica Benavides Gonzalez, "La Doctrina Augustiniana de las Rationes Seminales y la Creación del Mundo," *Intus-legere* 6 (2003), 53–64.

insight into the Holy Spirit as the Love that binds the Father and Son although there is a more Hilarian procession of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit does all of the functions listed above and more because its temporal mission is an outpouring of its eternal nature as both Archetype and Love proceeding from the Father through the Son. The World Soul is a beautiful fable that points to the outpouring of Divine Benevolence according to Divine Providence, and it is fitting that a fable containing such a mystery would be beautiful. Abelard may have been playing with 'children's tales' when he wrote about Plato's myth of the World Soul, but that does not mean there was no kernel of truth hidden on purpose for those curious about the metaphysical foundations of the created universe and how these foundations might relate to the Trinity.

PART THREE

Shaping Life



Abelard and Rhetoric: Widows and Virgins at the Paraclete

William Flynn

While Abelard's reputation as a teacher was based mainly on his mastery of dialectic, and his censure was based, in part, on the confidence with which he maintained that dialectical analysis could help determine the truth of any statement, there is ample evidence that he gradually came to value rhetoric as an equally necessary art.¹ Abelard had always been careful to preserve the priority of dialectic as that art which dealt with the analysis of the truth or falsity of verbal statements, a view that challenged the ethical dimension attributed to rhetoric by most classical and patristic rhetoricians.² However, as he turned his attention to questions concerned with the daily running of monastic institutions, his philosophical interests shifted from logical to ethical topics, from the theory of language to the theory of moral action. Since one might know the truth, yet not act on it, Abelard came to value the instrumental role that rhetoric could play as an art of persuasion.³ What has still not been sufficiently emphasised is the key role that Abelard's writings destined for the Paraclete played in this turn to rhetoric.⁴ Whatever the status of authenticity or

1 For recent work on Abelard's theory of rhetoric, see Constant J. Mews, "Peter Abelard on Dialectic, Rhetoric, and the Principles of Argument," in *Rhetoric and Renewal in the Latin West*, ed. Constant J. Mews, C. Nederman, and R. Thomson (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 37–53; for discussion of, and an edition of, Abelard's rhetorical excursus, see K. Fredborg, "Abelard on Rhetoric," 55–80; von Moos, "Literary Aesthetics in the Latin Middle Ages," 81–97; and Juanita Feros Ruys, "*Eloquencie vultum dipingere*: Eloquence and *Dictamen* in the Love Letters of Heloise and Abelard," 99–112. See also, W. Flynn, "*Ductus figuratus et subtilis*: Rhetorical Interventions for Women in Two Twelfth-Century Liturgies," in *Rhetoric Beyond Words*, ed. M. Carruthers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 250–280.

2 Mews, "Peter Abelard on Dialectic," 48, refers to Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana*, 4.4, as well as to Isidore, *Etymologiae*, 2.1.1.

3 This view is most clearly represented in his categorization of Scripture as a rhetorical genre, in the preface to *Comm. Rom.*, ed. Buytaert (1969b), 41; *Comm. Rom.*, trans. Cartwright (2012), 85. See also the discussions of this preface in von Moos, "Literary Aesthetics," 87–90; and Flynn, "*Ductus figuratus et subtilis*," 251–256.

4 T. J. Bell, *Peter Abelard After Marriage: The Spiritual Direction of Heloise and Her Nuns Through Liturgical Song* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 2007), provides a full-length study of the various layers of textuality relating to the sequences *Virgines castae* and *Epithalamica*. A good, though necessarily partial, picture of Abelard's rhetorical practice emerges, in which

redaction of Abelard's *Historia calamitatum* and the ensuing correspondence (*Ep.* 2–9), the series of letters is self-consciously a work of epistolary rhetoric, as demonstrated in Heloise's reproof (in *Ep.* 4) of Abelard for not having followed the proper rhetorical rules in the salutation of his *Ep.* 3.⁵ Moreover, the argumentation of the letters brings to the fore a major ethical issue—the mismatch between Heloise's disposition (*affectus*) and her goal (*intentio*) for her monastic conversion.⁶ This mismatch prompted Heloise (whether one believes her

Abelard's command of, and interest in, the Song of Songs is especially highlighted. See the review article by Constant J. Mews, "Singing the Song of Songs at the Paraclete: Abelard, Heloise, and Gregory the Great on Mary Magdalen as Lover and Bride," *Cîteaux Commentarii Cistercienses* 59 (2008), 299–313.

- 5 *Ep.* 4, 77: 'Miror, unice meus, quod praeter consuetudinem epistolarum, immo contra ipsum ordinem naturalem rerum, in ipsa fronte salutationis epistolaris me tibi praeponere praesumpsisti [...] Rectus quippe ordo est et honestus, ut qui superiores uel ad pares scribunt, eorum quibus scribunt nomina suis anteponant. Sin autem ad inferiores, praecedunt scriptiois ordine qui praecedunt rerum dignitate.' Translation: "I am surprised, my only one, that contrary to the custom of letters, indeed contrary to the order of natural matters, you have presumed to place me before you at the opening of an epistolary salutation [...] Indeed, it is the correct order and honourable that those who write to their superiors or to their equals place the names of those to whom they write before their own. But if they write to inferiors, they who take precedence in worthiness of affairs should take precedence in the order of writing." In citing the letters of Abelard and Heloise, I follow the numbering of the letters in PL 178, cols. 113A–340D, making use of these editions: HC, available by Monfrin (1967) (*Ep.* 1, 62–109); J. T. Muckle, 'The Personal Letters between Abelard and Heloise', *Mediaeval Studies* 15 (1953): 47–94 (*Ep.* 2, 68–73; *Ep.* 3, 73–7; *Ep.* 4, 77–82; *Ep.* 5, 83–94); J. T. Muckle, 'The Letter of Heloise on Religious Life and Abelard's First Reply', *Mediaeval Studies* 17 (1955): 240–81 (*Ep.* 6, 241–53; *Ep.* 7, 253–81); T. P. McLaughlin, 'Abelard's Rule for Religious Women', *Mediaeval Studies* 18 (1956): 241–92 (*Ep.* 8, 242–92); and Peter Abelard, *Letters IX–XIV*, ed. E. R. Smits (Groningen: University of Groningen, 1983) (*Ep.* 9, 219–37; *Ep.* 10, 239–47).
- 6 The language contrasting intention with disposition (and with will) was formulated more precisely in Abelard's ethics (*Scito te ipsum*), but is nascent (or cleverly alluded to) in *Ep.* 2 and *Ep.* 6. *Ep.* 2, 72, contrasts *effectus* with *affectus*: 'Nosti sum innocens. Non enim rei effectus sed efficientis affectus in crimine est. Nec quae fiunt sed quo animo fiunt aequitas pensat.' Translation: "You know I am innocent, for concerning a sin, it is not the doing of the matter, but the disposition of the doer. And equity does not weigh what things are done but in what spirit they are done." *Ep.* 6, 241–242, proposes a rhetorical solution to the ethical problem mentioning an *intentus animus*: 'Aliquod tamen dolori remedium uales conferre, si non hunc omnino possis auferre. Ut enim insertum clauum alius expellit sic cogitatio noua priorem excludit cum alias intentus animus priorum memoriam dimittere cogitur aut intermittere.' Translation: "Yet you can bring some consolation to my sadness, though you cannot remove it completely. For as a nail driven in pushes out another, so a new thought precludes an earlier, since the mind intent on other things is forced to put away, or to interrupt, the memory of earlier things."

dilemma was resolved, or continued) to propose that Abelard cooperate in making the Paraclete a success,⁷ especially as it became clear that the success of the Paraclete might ensure Abelard's reputation as a monastic reformer; its library, scriptorium, and the daily celebration of its liturgy might preserve his work; and its intercession (both political and spiritual) might prove efficacious for his soul.⁸ It is not overstating the case to say that this letter corpus as it has survived, especially in manuscripts most closely associated with the Paraclete, provides in epistolary form the rhetorical justification for its peculiar organisation and novel liturgical practices.⁹ Moreover, it is clear that Abelard was conscious that not only letter-writing (broadly conceived to include his treatise on the origin of nuns, and his monastic rule) but also poetry and preaching were the principal means at his disposal to create a new type of reformed monasticism. In other words, even though the formal treatises codifying grammatical analysis with a view toward the production of new verse, and treatises codifying rhetoric with a view to the production of sermons seem to postdate Abelard's life, these are precisely the areas he paid special attention to: In addition to the letters, he produced poetry (a collection of hymns for ferial, temporal and sanctoral cycles that outnumbered the hymn corpus traditionally in use) and a large collection of sermons for the most important feasts at the Paraclete.¹⁰

7 The rest of *Ep.* 6 proposes that Abelard write his treatise on the origin of nuns and, offering a particularly thorough criticism of gender bias in monastic rules, asks him to write a completely new rule for the Paraclete.

8 These themes are taken up most conspicuously in *Ep.* 3 and *Ep.* 5.

9 For more detailed discussion, see W. Flynn, "Letters, Liturgy and Identity: The Use of the Sequence *Epithalamica* at the Paraclete," in *Sapientia et Eloquentia: Meaning and Function in Liturgical Poetry, Music, Drama, and Biblical Commentary in the Middle Ages*, ed. G. Iversen and N. Bell (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 301–348.

10 Abelard's six *planctus* (laments in sequence form) may also have had liturgical use as part of the summer offices with Old Testament *historiae* (the selection of which varied greatly among institutions). Although, such a use would be highly unusual (with *planctus* substituting for hymns), their content would work very well for such a series of offices. For a new edition and translation of Peter Abelard's, *Planctus*, see Juanita Feros Ruys and John O. Ward, ed. and trans., *The Repentant Abelard: An Edition, Translation and Commentary of Peter Abelard's Carmen ad Astralabium and Planctus*, New Middle Ages Series (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming). In Bell, *Peter Abelard After Marriage* it is demonstrated how bound up the sequences that Chrysogonus Waddell attributed to Abelard (*Epithalamica* and *Virgines castae*) were with Abelard's other writings; and Flynn, "Letters, Liturgy, and Identity" demonstrates how effectively the sequence *Epithalamica* may be read in its full liturgical context at the Paraclete. The seminal works on the sequences are Chrysogonus Waddell, "Epithalamica: An Easter Sequence by Peter Abelard," *Musical Quarterly* 72 (1986), 239–271; and Chrysogonus Waddell, "Abelard and the Chaste

All three genres of practical rhetoric are invoked in one of the best examples of Abelard's rhetorical display—the preface to his sermon collection. It is in the form of a letter and uses language directly reminiscent of Abelard and Heloise's letter corpus especially in its opening and closing formulae; it mentions his 'little book' of hymns and sequences; and it then refers to the present 'minor' collection of sermons, setting up a rhetorical modesty topos.¹¹ Abelard's use of this topos could lead one to read the letter superficially as a statement of Abelard's distain for rhetorical devices, but the letter is written in elegantly balanced, always rhythmic phrases that are also usually assonant, consonant or rhymed. I have presented it below in lines divided to highlight some of these structural features:

*Libello quodam hymorum vel sequentiarum
a me nuper precibus tuis consummato,
veneranda in Christo et amanda soror Heloissa,
nonnulla insuper opuscula sermonum
iuxta petitionem tuam,
tam tibi quam spiritalibus filiabus tuis
in oratorio nostro congregatis,
scribere praeter consuetudinem nostram
utcumque maturavi.
Plus quippe lectioni quam sermoni deditus,
expositioni insisto planicem quaerens
non eloquentiae compositionem:
sensum litterae, non ornatum Rhetoricae.
Ac fortasse pura minusque ornata locutio
quanto planior fuerit
tanto simplicium intelligentiae
commodior erit,*

Virgins," unpublished paper. It should be noted, however, that Dronke has recently reiterated his arguments against Abelard's authorship of the two sequences in Peter Dronke and Giovanni Orlandi, "New Works by Abelard and Heloise?," *Filologia mediolatina* 12 (2005), 123–177 (Dronke's contribution is on 123–146). For the dating and descriptions of treatises in the preceptive traditions of medieval rhetoric, see J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from St Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 135–355.

- 11 Abelard would be fully aware that Cicero's first way of gaining benevolence for the speaker is to display humility; see Cicero, *De inventione*, 1.16.22. A short description of the topos as part of medieval prefaces can be found in E. R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. W. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 83–84.

et pro qualitate auditorum ipsa inculti sermonis rusticitas
quaedam erit ornatus urbanitas,
et quoddam condimentum saporis,
paruularum intelligentia facilis.
In his autem scribendis seu disponendis
ordinem festiuitatum tenens,
ab ipso nostrae redemptionis
exordio sum exorsus.
Vale in Domino eius ancilla,
mihi quondam in seculo chara,
nunc in Christo charissima,
in carne tunc uxor,
nunc in spiritu soror
*atque in professione sacri propositi consors.*¹²

(Recently, having completed a certain small book of hymns and of sequences at your request—O sister to be revered in Christ, and to be loved, O Heloise—I have hastened, contrary to my custom, to write in one way or another, some minor works of sermons, according to your petition, as much for you as for your spiritual daughters gathered in our oratory. Indeed, devoted more to lecturing than to preaching, I press on, seeking explanation's level ground, not eloquence's confection: language's meaning, not Rhetoric's ornament. And perhaps, being clean and less ornate, the more the style is straightforward, the more it will be suitable to the understanding of the uncritical; and in proportion to that trait of the listeners, the rusticity of an uncultivated sermon will be an urbanity of adornment, and the quick understanding of the little women, a spice for their sense of taste. Now, retaining the order of feasts in these sermons that are to be written down (or rather, to be arranged), I have commenced from the very origin of our redemption. Farewell in the Lord, his handmaiden, once dear to me in the world, now, in Christ, most dear: then, in the flesh, a wife, now, in spirit, a sister, and in the profession of a sacred purpose, a consort.)

Not only is the structure of the letter highly wrought, the language is also so loaded with technical rhetorical (and literary) meanings that it is almost

12 A corrected edition of the text with similar line divisions can be found in De Santis, *I sermoni*, 86. (However, I have reinstated the line 'veneranda in Christo et amanda soror Heloissa' dropped in this edition without comment, yet appearing in her translation in n. 17, on the same page.)

impossible to bring them out in translation. Particularly noticeable is the unusual opening, in which the recipient is directly addressed in vocative rather than in dative, in a line that interrupts the balance of four intermingled adverbial and object clauses each with an added prepositional phrase. This striking (and highly audible) use of direct address evokes the oral situation of a sermon preached in person for which the whole collection is a surrogate. The line is also (perhaps intentionally) ambiguous: As Jan Ziolkowski pointed out, it might be more tamely read as 'sister to be revered and loved in Christ', emphasizing only their common religious life.¹³ But its structure is echoed by the three-fold assonance and three-fold rhyme of the two closing formulae in which the former worldly relationships between Abelard and Heloise are boldly repositioned as those of male and female rulers of the Paraclete. In the letter's body, the most ornate language is used to complete the modesty topos: It invokes the art of Rhetoric itself to call Abelard's mastery of the art into question—he is more accustomed to lecturing than preaching, so he is going to speak plainly and clearly rather than elegantly. However, Abelard justifies his predilection with two rhetorical devices, arguing that he is preaching *ad status* and invoking the doctrine of poetic license: The 'little women' (an echo of Jerome, as Paola de Santis has pointed out)¹⁴ are 'uncritical' (*simplex*), so his use of more direct diction which might be counted as a fault for a different audience, will actually be counted as urbanity. In short, the sermon preface, when its form and content are fully considered, reveals itself not only to be a display of highly rhetorical prose, it also indicates that the sermons are part of a larger rhetorical project that includes Abelard's other contributions to the Paraclete's rationale, organisation, and liturgical life, all of which were instituted under his and Heloise's joint leadership.

Widows and Virgins at the Paraclete

As Thomas Bell has argued, the ultimate goal of the whole of this rhetorical outpouring was to provide a liturgical setting that might allow Heloise and her nuns to affirm their religious vocations by closely identifying themselves with the exemplum of the *sponsa Christi*, particularly as it was conveyed through interpretations of the Song of Songs and Ps. 44, in two sequences (that he attributes to Abelard). The sequences, like the key biblical texts, are in the form

13 Ziolkowski, *Letters of Peter Abelard*, 64–72, contains further discussion and excellent notes, along with his fine translation of this letter.

14 De Santis, *I sermoni*, 86.

of bridal processional songs (*epithalamica*).¹⁵ However, a narrow focus on the sequence texts tends to emphasize the *sponsa Christi* image in preference to others that are developed equally strongly, and to flatten the subtle ways in which nuns coming from quite differing life-histories are differently integrated into the goal of celebrating their eventual heavenly marriage.

In fact, if one reads the letter corpus as a connected argument underpinning the Paraclete as an institution, Heloise's questioning of her own motivations functions to give voice to objections that could have arisen over her leadership (presumably in order to forestall them) and to shift the focus to her role as the community's co-founder. Such a strategy was particularly necessary since rhetoric of the *sponsa Christi* (at least in nuns' institutions) often tended to be intimately connected to a discourse which brings Christ's virginity and sacrifice into a close relationship to the ideology of clerical chastity, and which accords virginity with quasi-priestly status: Nuns who have rejected the world (sacrificing sexual relationships) in anticipation of their heavenly union give themselves as a quasi-Eucharistic sacrifice, and so might be favoured in selecting abbesses. While Heloise's position in her community could never be that of consecrated virgin, she could be considered to be a widow: A voluntary and mutual agreement between a married couple to go into monastic institutions gave both of them the legal status of widows. Even though Heloise (in *Ep. 4*) states that she took her vow only in obedience to Abelard's command, her willingness to obey the command meant that her status as a widow was unassailable.¹⁶ Moreover, since other formerly married women entering the Paraclete would make up at least a significant minority of the nuns at any given time, Abelard may have considered a rhetorical strategy that could create a common discourse in which both widows and consecrated virgins were essential to its proper functioning.

Abelard's construction of both widows and virgins as *sponsae Christi* was first presented in embryo in *Ep. 5*, where Abelard interpreted the biblical *sponsa's* *Nigra sum, sed formosa* (I am black, but comely) as more clearly suited (*expressius*) to (Benedictine) nuns, because their black habits outwardly proclaimed their status as 'widows', in continuity with the first women followers of Jesus, who (like widows) mourned him at the tomb and were the first

15 Bell, *Peter Abelard After Marriage*, 14, 39–73, 275–306.

16 *Ep. 4*, 81. On the legal status of married religious, see P. L. Reynolds, *Marriage in the Western Church: The Christianisation of Marriage during the Patristic and Early Modern Periods* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 227–238.

witnesses to the resurrection.¹⁷ In identifying the biblical *sponsa* as a widow, Abelard was silently drawing on a traditional contrast between Jerusalem, personified as a widow in the book of Lamentations 1.1, and the New Jerusalem, revealed as a 'bride adorned for her husband' in the Apocalypse 21.2. Not only was the Lamentations text linked to the Song of Songs as its formal antithesis, both texts were allegorically linked to the death and resurrection of Christ by their liturgical use (Lamentations at Good Friday and the Apocalypse during Matins in the Easter season), allowing Abelard to draw upon a powerful image in which a widow was eschatologically transformed into a bride.¹⁸ Abelard supported his identification of all nuns with widows by arguing (principally in *Ep.* 7) that nuns had their origins in the diaconal relationship that women had towards Jesus during his life, and that this relationship had its historical continuation in proto-monastic communities led by widows as related in 1 Timothy, chapters 3 and 5. Abelard stressed that the early church was commanded to be especially supportive of these communities.

In highlighting this cluster of texts, Abelard not only placed widows at the centre of women's monastic identity, but also created an interpretation of widowhood (at least at the allegorical, tropological and anagogical levels) that could include within it the category of consecrated virgins, who wore the same sombre habit as those in the order of widows. Thus, one might say that at the Paraclete, while all virgins are allegorically widows, not all widows are literally virgins, yet all might transfer their affections to their heavenly *sponsus*, Christ. Abelard's liturgical innovations encouraged this transfer by interpreting the loss experienced at Jesus' death by his women disciples as the mourning of widows. Each of them, anticipating the order of nuns, had left everything to follow Jesus, and had lost everything at his death. Each experienced joy at Jesus' resurrection, anticipating her transformation from a citizen of Jerusalem, abandoned by her Lord like a widow, to a citizen of the New Jerusalem, adorned for her husband like a bride.

17 For fuller analysis of these passages, see Flynn, "Letters, Liturgy, and Identity"; and Flynn, "*Ductus figuratus et subtilis*."

18 The linkage of widowed Jerusalem to the *sponsa* of the Song of Songs was exploited by Paschasius Radbertus and was prominently featured in the gloss (written before 1125) of Gilbert the Universal, *Glossa ordinaria in Lamentationes Ieremie prophete, Prothemata et Liber I*, ed., intro., and trans. A. Andrée, *Studia Latina Stockhomensia* 52 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2005), 162. See also A. Andrée, "From *Propheta plangens* to *Rhetor divinus*: Toward an Understanding of the Rhetorical Hermeneutics of Gilbert the Universal in His Gloss on Lamentations," in *Sapientia et Eloquentia*, ed. G. Iversen and N. Bell, 115–146.

Although Abelard's construction of all nuns as widows was designed to create a shared communal identity, he seems also to have been keenly aware that the standard rhetoric exalting virgins could undermine Heloise's authority.¹⁹ For example, arguing (in *Ep.* 7) that the widows mentioned in 1 Timothy are deaconesses and that deaconesses and abbesses are two names for the same office, Abelard quotes Gregory the Great's use of the same biblical passage to prohibit the appointment of youthful abbesses:²⁰

*Hanc quoque Apostoli prouidentiam, de diaconissis scilicet eligendis, beatus Gregorius secutus, Maximo Syracusano episcopo scribit his uerbis: Iuuenulas abbatissas uehementissime prohibemus. Nullum igitur episcopum fraternitas tua nisi sexagenariam uirginem, cuius uita hoc atque mores exegerint, uelare permittat.*²¹

(And following the Apostle's provision, Blessed Gregory wrote to Maximus, bishop of Syracuse about how deaconesses should be chosen in these words: We most vehemently prohibit youthful abbesses. Therefore your brotherhood of bishops should allow none but a virgin of sixty years, whose life and character they have tested.)

However, when Abelard described the office of the deaconess/abbess in his Rule for the Paraclete (*Ep.* 8), although appealing to the argument of his last letter (*Ep.* 7), he flatly contradicted Gregory's statement that the abbess should be a virgin, and instead appealed to the greater (and earlier) authority of the Apostle (in 1 Timothy itself), in order to argue for the appointment of a literal widow as deaconess:

Quae quidem omnia quid intelligentiae uel rationis habeant, quantum aestimamus, epistola praecedente nostra satis disseruimus. Maxime cur eam Apostolus unius uiri et prouectae uelit esse aetatis. Unde non mediocriter miramur quomodo perniciosa haec in aecclesia consuetudo inoleuit ut

19 It is worth pointing out that when the editors summarised the patristic literature in the "Introduction" to C. L. Carson and A. J. Weisel, ed., *Constructions of Widowhood and Virginity in the Middle Ages* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1999), 1–7, they arrived at a reading that entirely matches the constructions that Abelard offered to the Paraclete nuns in *Ep.* 7.

20 Although the passage mentions that the abbess should be sixty years old, Heloise, herself, had referred, in *Ep.* 6, 245, to a canon that allowed the ordination of men as deacons at twenty years of age, but deaconesses at forty, and in *Ep.*, 8, 252 (quoted below), Abelard states only that the abbess should be of advanced age.

21 *Ep.* 7, 264.

*quae uirgines sunt potius quam quae uiros cognouerunt ad hoc eligantur et frequenter iuniores senioribus praeficiantur.*²²

(We thoroughly explained in our last letter how highly we regard everything [the Apostle] held whether from his understanding or from his reasoning; especially why the Apostle wants her [the deaconess/abbess] to be the wife of one man, and of advanced age; whence I marvel not a little at how the pernicious custom has grown up in the church that those who are virgins are chosen for this office rather than those who have known men, and frequently younger women are placed in charge of older women.)

The stipulation that only true widows be appointed as abbess at the Paraclete, strengthened by Abelard's appeal to apostolic authority, would certainly have had the effect (and probably had the intention) of shoring up Heloise's authority against a tradition that often accorded special privileges for consecrated virgins.

Abelard was, of course, fully aware of the texts that accorded a special prerogative for virgins and had even quoted a large segment (abridged here) of *Virginum Laus*, attributing it to Jerome, as part of his treatise on the origin of nuns (*Ep.* 7):

*Istae proprium aliquid prae caeteris habent, dum de illo sancto et immaculato Aecclesiae grege quasi sanctiores purioresque hostiae pro uoluntatis suae meritis a Spiritu Sancto eliguntur, et per summum sacerdotem Dei offeruntur altario.*²³

(These women have something proper to them beyond other women, since they are chosen by the Holy Spirit from the holy and immaculate flock of the Church, as holier and purer sacrifices on account of the merits of their will, and are offered at the altar by God's high priest.)

The key phrases in the text, *sanctiores purioresque hostiae* (holier and purer sacrifices), *per summum sacerdotem Dei offeruntur altario* (they are offered at the altar by God's high priest), bring the language of the consecration of the Mass and of the consecration of virgins into close relationship, suggesting that the sacrifice of virginity has an especially close relationship to the sacrifice of the virgin, born of a Virgin, Christ. In this reading, the high-priest, allegorically Christ himself, offers the virgins as sacrificial victims upon the altar at

²² *Ep.* 8, 252.

²³ *Ep.* 7, 267.

their consecration, which suggests that consecrated virgins have a strong connection with priests who make visible Christ's self-sacrifice. A virgin-abbess might exploit her quasi-priestly status to gain higher standing both within and beyond her monastery.²⁴

However, Abelard's interpretation of the passage ignores their traditional allegorical meanings, even undermining them by immediately suggesting that the special nature of their consecration consisted in the fact that (unlike monks) virgins should only be consecrated by a high priest (which he glosses as a bishop), and that they should be so consecrated only on certain high feast days unless they are in danger of death:

*Virginum quippe consecrationem, nisi periculo mortis urgente, celebrari alio tempore non licet quam in Epiphania et Albis Paschalibus et in apostolorum natalitiis; nec nisi a summo sacerdote, id est episcopo, tam ipsas quam ipsarum sacris capitibus imponenda uelamina sanctificari. Monachis autem [...] etiam si sint virgines qualibet die benedictionem et ab abbate suscipere [...], permissum est.*²⁵

(Indeed, one may not celebrate the consecration of virgins, except when the danger of death is imminent, at any time other than Epiphany, the Sunday in Albs [Easter Octave] and the Nativities [feast days] of Apostles. Nor may either they or the veils placed upon their heads be consecrated, unless by the high priest, i.e. the bishop. Yet monks [...] even if they are virgins, are allowed to receive the blessing from the abbot on any day whatsoever.)

Since even virgin monks were not invested with rites celebrated as solemnly as those for virgin nuns, Abelard suggests that the special prerogative that virgins have pertains to their sex rather than to their virginal status. Abelard, fully aware of the rhetoric that accorded a quasi-priestly significance to virginity, subordinated it to an argument that highlighted the dignity of all women.

24 See, for example, Hildegard of Bingen's comments on the relative status of virgins and widows in Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias*, ed. A. Führkötter and A. Carlevaris, CCCM 43, 2.3–2.6, 133–306. To summarise: Hildegard divides the church into three orders, clergy, virgins and laity. In her regulatory material, she states that virgins who lapse forever lose the right to be called *Dominae* but must be called *Ancillae*, but it is impossible to tell whether these titles were enforced within her monastery. While virgins comprise an order of the church of their own, Hildegard assigns widows to a cleaner and purer category of the laity. While both widows and virgins may call Christ their *sponsus*, only virgins are described as possessing in him 'all the priesthood and ministry' of God's altar.

25 *Ep.* 7, 267.

Their virginal status was special because it was more honourable than the virginal status of men, but did not give them a kind of priestly authority over other women: Any potential rivalry between consecrated virgins and widows was minimized.

Hymns for Holy Women

The lengthy and complex treatise on the origin of nuns (*Ep.* 7) that Abelard wrote for the Paraclete community is versified in summary form in his extraordinary series of ten hymns for Holy Women found in the third libellus of his hymnal. This libellus contained hymns for the sanctorale; however, it had an unusual structure (incompletely preserved in only one manuscript, Brussels, *Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique*, ms. 10147–10158, fols 91v–96v) that most likely retains Abelard's original order, mixing together hymns for the common with hymns for individual saints, and presents their hierarchy in a slightly unusual order (Mary, Apostles, Evangelists, Innocents, Martyrs, Confessors, Holy Women, Angels, All Saints).²⁶ Its rationale is partially based on the standard liturgical hierarchy for saints, but also on Abelard's interpretation of salvation history. Thus, Mary, the apostles, the evangelists, and the innocents are presented in a section dealing with saints who were thought to be alive during the events recorded in the Gospels; however, the innocents (martyrs), already moved from the temporale, are also presented out of their chronological position in the New Testament narrative, presumably because they are of lower rank than the other New Testament saints. Next (male and female) martyrs as well as confessors represent the early church in the expected liturgical hierarchy. These are followed by the large series of ten hymns for women, comprising

26 Waddell demonstrated that it is possible to trace many of the elements of the Paraclete liturgy of 1132–1132 through later liturgical sources that he both edited and commented on extensively. Reference will be made to Waddell's editions and commentaries published in the Cistercian Liturgy Series (Trappist, KY: Gethsemani Abbey, 1983–1989), comprising the following volumes: *The Old French Paraclete Ordinary: Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale Ms français 14410*, and the *Paraclete Breviary: Chamont, Bibliothèque Municipale Ms 31: Introduction and Commentary*, CLS 3 (1985); *The Old French Paraclete Ordinary: Edition*, CLS 4 (1983); *The Paraclete Breviary: Edition*, 3 vols., CLS 5–6 (1983) and CLS 7 (1984); *Hymn Collections from the Paraclete: Introduction and Commentary*, CLS 8 (1989), cited hereafter by series, volume, and page. Peter Abelard's *Hymnarius Paraclitensis* [*Hymn. Par.*] is available in Chrysogonus Waddell, ed., *Hymn Collections from the Paraclete: Edition*, CLS 9 (Trappist, KY: Gethsemani Abbey, 1987) and the Latin texts of the hymns, and hymn numbers, below, refer to his edition. (I have, however, occasionally adopted alternative readings, and the line numbers refer to the text and translation below.)

three cycles: four hymns for feasts of Holy Women, four for feasts of Virgin-Martyrs, and two for Mary Magdalene (for full text and translations, see below, Hymns 88–97). The Brussels manuscript breaks off after the first two lines of the ninth hymn of the series (hymn 96), but as Waddell has demonstrated, the tenth hymn can be found in the Paraclete Breviary. Waddell also suggested that two other series of hymns from the Breviary (those for feasts of Angels and for All Saints) might have made up the end of the original hymnal, but gives no rationale for the placement of angels well down the hierarchy instead of directly after hymns for Mary.²⁷ Nevertheless Waddell's conjecture seems sound since the presentation of the hymns in this order completes the narration of salvation history by looking to the future church of angels and saints in the celestial city.

The mixing of chronological and hierarchical arrangements that Abelard adopted for his hymnal enabled him to retain an arrangement by feasts of the sanctorale that nevertheless starts from the 'origin of our redemption', i.e. the same arrangement that he adopted for his sermon collection, as noted in the preface to it quoted above. This strategy also allowed all ten hymns for women to be entered in one series, even though they were written to serve three different feasts. The first cycle begins with an introductory hymn (88) that establishes a hierarchical order (Mary, virgins, widows, and even 'harlots' who represent redeemed sinners). In the next three hymns of the cycle (89–91), apart from the virgin Mary, the treatment of the women follows biblical order, presenting women from the Old Testament followed by women from the New. The next cycle of four hymns (92–95) uses the virgin-martyrs to represent saints of the early church, but the last two hymns of the series (96–97) break its chronological presentation, since they are for the feast day of a New Testament saint, Mary Magdalene, who had already been mentioned in the series (88 and 91). In these hymns for her feast day, she is treated as the outstanding example of a penitent sinner, so the interruption of the chronological arrangement of the series is justified by her lower liturgical rank.

The whole series of ten hymns (as are the other series in Abelard's hymnal) is unified by his writing them in a metre that appears nowhere else in the hymnal: 4p + 7pp × 4 . 4p + 5pp × 2 with each pair of full lines ending with a half-rhyme (i.e. even though the line ending has the stress on the third to the last syllable, the rhymes indiscriminately organise the sound of the final one or two syllables).²⁸ Each of Abelard's series is also thought to have had its own tune,

²⁷ Waddell, *CLS* 8, 40.

²⁸ The summary of the metre is adapted from *ibid.*, 26, but I have indicated the final accent for each half-line: '4p' indicates that the half-line is four syllables in length ending on a paroxytone accent, a penult; '+' indicates a caesura; '7pp' and '5pp' indicate that the

unique to Abelard's hymnal, but only the tune for the day-hour hymns (10–29) of the first libellus, has survived.²⁹

By carefully constructing his series of women's hymns with a unified formal structure, Abelard was thus able to pursue the principal rhetorical strategy already seen in his letters above, levelling the differences between the two orders of women at the Paraclete by emphasising the dignity accorded to women in scripture and tradition: a dignity greater than that of men, which more fittingly grants to all nuns (both widows and virgins) the title of *sponsa Christi*.

Throughout the series, Abelard relies heavily on three stereotypes of women that permeate much Christian (and classical) literature: Women are at fault for humanity's fall; they are weaker than men; and they are more bodily than men. But he then carefully chooses exempla that overturn the stereotypes, a strategy taken from his letter-treatise *Ep.* 7. In fact, the first four hymns (88–91), which establish the biblical precedents, and the next three, which establish the early church precedents in virgin-martyrs (92–94), follow *Ep.* 7 very closely.³⁰ However, the hymn series is less complex and recursive than the letter-treatise, in which Abelard's first concern was to establish the women disciples of Jesus as the precedent for the order of nuns. In the hymn cycle the material is rearranged so that the New Testament archetypes of nuns are placed in their proper chronological order.

In order to highlight the rhetorical strategies Abelard uses to establish the dignity of the holy women (both widows and virgins) who serve as models for nuns, I will discuss the hymns in order, taking into account the tension between the hierarchical and chronological arrangements that give structure to them (as well as to the whole libellus). Abelard begins the first hymn of the series (88) with an appeal to salvation history, attributing sin and redemption

half-line is seven or five syllables in length ending on a proparoxytone accent, an antepenult; '× 4' or '× 2' indicates the number of lines the pattern repeats and the full stop'' indicates where the pattern shifts within the stanza.

29 Ibid., 45–54.

30 Hymns 88 and 89 summarise material from *Ep.* 7, 268–270 and 274. Hymn 90 summarizes *Ep.* 7, 270–271. Hymn 91 begins with material from *Ep.* 7, 271, but then summarizes 254–258, 271, and 274. Hymn 92 uses material from *Ep.* 7, 270 and 275. Hymn 93 summarizes *Ep.* 7, 270–271. See also *Hymn. Par.*, available in Joseph Szövérfy, ed., *Peter Abelard's Hymnarius Paraclitensis*, 2 vols., vol. 2, 254–263 and 244–249 for a critical commentary that provides cross-references to Abelard's other writings in PL 178. (Abelard similarly coordinated his day-hour hymn series with his commentary *Hex.*)

to both sexes (ll. 1–4), and argues that the priority of Eve's sin was answered by the greater grace accorded to women in Mary (ll. 5–10). Mary is thus treated as *sui generis* because of her unique role as Virgin Mother (ll. 11–12) and is therefore always placed above the other ranks (see also hymn 89, ll. 1–2). The last two stanzas name the women by rank: after the Virgin Mary come virgins, widows, and 'harlots' (representing redeemed sinners). In the third stanza, Abelard treats the ranks of women in hierarchical order (virgins, then widows), but he minimizes differences in dignity: while virgins directly imitate Mary (ll. 13–14), widows do not 'lack marriage' (ll. 15–18)—a somewhat cryptic reference to the rhetoric of the widow becoming a bride (*sponsa*), which influenced Abelard's choice of biblical references in *Ep.* 7, discussed above. The fourth (final) stanza of this hymn mentions two 'harlots', to invoke a category of famous sinners who nevertheless attained sainthood, and points out that the virtue of Mary of Egypt and Mary Magdalene proved greater than their fault (ll. 19–22). Any reader of the letter correspondence will recognise that the offensive term used for harlot, *scorta*, echoes the famous paragraph in Heloise's *Ep.* 2, in which she expressed a preference to be Abelard's concubine or harlot (*scorta*) rather than his wife, and that even if Augustus were to offer her marriage to make her his empress, she would prefer to be Abelard's whore (*meretrix*). The latter term is taken up towards the end of the hymn series, where Mary Magdalene is described as a *felix meretrix* (blessed whore) (hymn 96, l. 17).³¹ Such references demonstrate that the rhetoric of the hymn series, like that of the letters, may have been designed to buttress Heloise's authority over her community.

Hymns 89 and 90 develop the Old Testament types for each of the ranks of women, again first explaining that the honour bestowed on Mary as Mother (*genitrix*) of God is unique (hymn 89, ll. 1–2). The types for each rank are then presented in a reversed hierarchical order (though the ranks themselves are seldom mentioned in the hymn text), emphasising the superior strength of holy women: Thus, Eve (wife and sinner) has a more honourable creation than Adam's, since hers was within paradise (ll. 7–10),³² and she was made from bone, a stronger substance than clay (ll. 11–12). The third stanza describes three widows (ll. 13–18) who acted more courageously than men. Only one of them, Judith, whose name is withheld, is called a widow (l. 16). The other two,

³¹ *Ep.*, 2, 71.

³² Abelard quotes Ambrose to establish this point in *Ep.*, 7, 268. See Ambrose, *De paradiso*, in *Sancti Ambrosii Opera*, pars 1: *Exameron; De paradiso; De Cain et Abel; De Noe; De Abraham; De Isaac; De bono mortis*, ed. Karl Schenkel, CSEL 32.1 (Vienna: Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1897), 265–335, (at 280).

Deborah and the mother of seven sons, were not called widows in scripture,³³ but were named as widows in early church and patristic sources.³⁴ The final stanza of this hymn (ll. 19–22) and opening stanza of hymn 90 (ll. 1–6) treat Jephtah's daughter and her sacrifice of her life as a result of a vow her father had made. Her status as a virgin is made clear in the second stanza of hymn 90 that compares her constancy with that of virgin-martyrs (ll. 7–12, developed further in hymns 92 and 93, which are dedicated to virgin-martyrs). The third stanza of hymn 90 presents the final exemplum of a woman from the Old Testament in the series, Esther. This placement differs from her placement in *Ep.* 7, where Esther is treated along with Deborah and Judith as another example of a woman who succeeded against enemies when men failed. In the hymn series, however, Esther, as a married queen, does not fit neatly into the reverse hierarchy according to rank (representing neither widows nor virgins), but (like all the holy women) may be used typologically to represent the church who frees her people (ll. 15–16).³⁵ However, her placement at the top of the reserved hierarchy suggests that Abelard has a more specific role in mind for Queen Esther, as a type representing the Queen of heaven, the Virgin Mary, and this foreshadows his use of the royal bridal imagery of Ps. 44 (an epithalamium used at Marian feasts and feasts of Virgins, and the source for hymn 94, ll. 19–21).³⁶

In hymn 91, Abelard returns to the normal hierarchical pattern in order to discuss types from the New Testament. First he briefly mentions (ll. 5–6)

33 For Deborah, see Judges 4:9–4:10; for the mother of seven sons, see 2 Maccabees 7:1–7:40.

34 See Ambrose, "De viduis," in *De virginibus: De viduis*, ed. Franco Gori, Sancti Ambrosii episcopi Mediolanensis opera 14.1, 243–319, chapter 7 on Judith and chapter 8 on Deborah; and Anonymous, *Passio ss: Machabaeorum, die antike lateinische Übersetzung des IV. Makkabäerbuches*, ed. Heinrich Dörrie, Abhandlungen der Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Philog-histor. Kl., Dritte Folge 22 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1938). Heinrich Dörrie lists thirty-nine manuscript sources, most of which date from the ninth to the thirteenth centuries and many of which have West Frankish Benedictine provenance. Most of 4 Maccabees (5–18) deals with the sons' martyrdoms, presenting them as a triumph of reason over emotion. Speeches attributed to the mother occur in chapters 16–18, and she is identified as a widow at 16:6 and 18:9. The first identification forms part of a lament that a lesser woman would have said, while the second forms part of her oration. The text (17:1) reports that she was thought to have thrown herself on the pyre burning the remains of her sons, in order to avoid being violated.

35 See Jerome, "In Sophoniam," in *Commentarii in prophetas minores*, ed. M. Adrien, CCSL 76A, 655; and Isidore, *Allegoriae quaedam sacrae scripturae*, PL 83:116A.

36 Bell, *Peter Abelard After Marriage*, 66–71, discusses the influence of Psalm 44 on the sequence *Virgines castae*, and on 255–257, discusses the similar use of the psalm in hymn 94, *Quantum sponso*.

not only Mary, a virgin, and Anna, a widow (the women whom he had singled out in *Ep.* 7 as the model for nuns' orders),³⁷ but also Mary's cousin Elisabeth, whom he had identified in *Ep.* 7 as a wife (*coniugata*). Although Elisabeth thus represents a different category of holy women (neither virgin nor widow), in *Ep.* 7, Abelard had grouped Elisabeth with Anna to argue that they both deserved the title prophet of prophets for their early recognition of Christ: Anna (given the title prophet in Lk 2.36) and Elisabeth who recognised the Son of God at his conception.³⁸

The final two stanzas of hymn 91 (ll. 7–18) then discuss Mary Magdalene (without naming her), summarising the opening arguments from *Ep.* 7, which describe women providing diaconal ministry to Jesus both during his life and after his death.³⁹ Since Abelard followed Gregory the Great's conflation of Mary Magdalene with all the women who anointed Jesus, she, a penitent sinner, emerges as the principal type for women leaders of monastic communities.⁴⁰ Both Abelard and Heloise preferred the early church title *diaconissa* to the title *abatissa* to reflect the origin of the office in women's ministering to Christ.⁴¹ Mary Magdalene is thus credited with the corporeal anointing of Christ as priest and king (ll. 7–10), actions that Abelard equated with handing down the sacraments (ll. 11–12). Mary Magdalene's role as the apostle to the apostles (a title mentioned in *Ep.* 7) is alluded to in the hymn text, in the reference to the woman who was the first to see the risen Christ (ll. 13–14), and her identity is confirmed by the closing lines that characterise her as "more worthless because of sin" but preceding all others in this grace (ll. 15–18).⁴²

37 *Ep.* 7, 269: 'Ac prius in Anna et Maria uiduis et uirginibus sanctae professionis forma est exhibita quam in Ioanne uel apostolis monasticae religionis exempla uiris proposita.' Translation: "And first in Anna and in Mary was the model of a holy profession displayed for widows and virgins that the examples of John and of the Apostles had displayed for men of the monastic order."

38 *Ibid.*, 263 and 271.

39 *Ibid.*, 254–258. Diaconal acts listed by Abelard included the simple provision of physical needs, such as Mary of Bethany preparing food, but especially the multiple anointings to which the biblical text itself attributes spiritual meanings; see Luke 7:36–7:50; Luke 8:2; and John 11:2.

40 See Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in euangelia*, ed. R. Étaix, CCSL 141 (1999), 2.25, 205 and 2.33, 292.

41 For the *diaconissa* see *Ep.* 4, 77; *Ep.* 6, 245; *Ep.* 7, 262–265; *Ep.* 8, 252–254, 258–259, and *passim*.

42 *Ep.* 7, 257–258. In his Easter sermon, Abelard refers to Miriam as another prophet of prophets, who is the Old Testament type for the apostle of the apostles (Mary Magdalen), see *Serm.* 13, PL 484B–485A.

Mary Magdalene would not fit either the category of virgin or widow, but her association with the women mourning Jesus made her allegorically a widow, mourning for her true *sponsus*, and therefore Abelard's most important type for the order of nuns.⁴³

The next two hymns of the series, 92–93, use the feasts of Virgin-Martyrs to extend the treatment of the types for nuns into the period of the early church. As in his letters, Abelard faced the difficulty of presenting the patristic layer of extravagant praise of virginity in such a way that it would not undermine his principal goal of uniting both widows and virgins under the leadership of an older widow. Thus, even though Abelard acknowledges and even plays with the idea of the priestly status of virgins, the dominant imagery for them is as a type of the *sponsa Christi* that was particularly adapted to nuns, since their renunciation of the world makes all nuns widows (see *Ep.* 5). The dominant strand of rhetoric is again to celebrate the achievements of women (here as women martyrs), contrasting them favourably with men (especially in hymn 93). The first hymn of this cycle (92) starts by identifying the virgin and the martyr with the *sponsa Christi* (l. 1), and although Abelard clearly signals that the cycle is appropriate to virgin-martyrs, he qualifies the sacrifice made by virgins as opposed to that made by martyrs by inverting the theme of bodily suffering of martyrs, stating that “the virgin overcomes the flesh and the martyr overcomes the enemy” (l. 4): Only the death of a virgin-martyr can fully confirm that her sacrifice is acceptable. In a passage that closely follows Abelard's discussion of St Agnes in *Ep.* 7, the stanza mentions that this double sacrifice of virgin-martyrs gains the reward of a duplex palm of victory (ll. 3 and 7), i.e. the reward for the sacrifice of both heart (or spirit) and body (ll. 13–14, 19–22).⁴⁴ Abelard equates this sacrifice with the sacrifice of the “red and tender calf” (ll. 14–16)—a reference to Moses' making the old covenant of the law in Exod. 24.4–8 as a type for the sacrifice of the new covenant that aligns the sacrifice of virgin-martyrs with the Mass. However, the stanza does not explain the allegory, stating instead that it can be known only “if you match well the reality with the signs” (l. 18).

Hymn 93 stresses the theme of the miraculous fortitude of virgin-martyrs, developing material used earlier to describe Jephtah's daughter, their Old Testament type (compare ll. 1–12 with hymn 90, ll. 1–12). Again, the strategy is to use the stereotype of women's frailty to emphasise that their achievement must be that much more miraculous than men's. This theme is also present at

43 See the remarks on Abelard's *Ep.* 5 above; and Flynn, “Letters, Liturgy, and Identity,” 311–317 and 334–341.

44 *Ep.* 7, 275.

the conclusion of the hymn (ll. 19–22), which draws on the material from *Ep.* 7 that described St Agnes: the rhetorical question, asking who should the young call ‘bearded men’ (l. 19), is paraphrased from a sermon on St Agnes by Gregory the Great.⁴⁵ Although hymn 92 began by identifying virgins and martyrs with the *sponsa Christi*, this theme is not taken up again until hymn 93 (ll. 13–16), which paraphrases the famous passage from the Song of Songs 8.6–7 that claims that love cannot be conquered even by death. The implication is that it is the sacrificial love displayed by virgin-martyrs that ultimately provides them with their right to the title *sponsa*.

In hymns 94 and 95 the virgin-martyrs are greeted in heaven in a procession that leads them to their heavenly *sponsus*. Hymn 94 aligns the sacrifice made by virgin-martyrs with that of Christ, who is also described as a virgin-martyr (ll. 5–6). In a section that most clearly stresses a special prerogative of virgin-martyrs, the text claims that their purity brings them into an especially fitting relationship with Christ that accords them a place at his side (ll. 7–12), and it is their priestly purity that means they will not be separated from him on account of the “beauty of sacred flesh” (l. 9). It should be emphasised that those living as consecrated virgins in the Paraclete can only anticipate this status, since, as the hymn text maintains, it is the constancy of faith exhibited by virgin-martyrs preserving their bodies up to their deaths that earns them the right to lead the ‘other women’ (l. 11). Since Abelard had carefully defined the true sacrifice of a virgin as an integrity of spirit as well as of body in hymn 92 (ll. 13–14), the integrity of body that constitutes their sacrifice in hymn 94 (ll. 1–4) is an outward sign of the constancy of their faithful intention.

The remainder of hymn 94 (ll. 11–28) describes a bridal procession leading (in hymn 95) to the bedchamber of the heavenly *sponsus*. The procession begins with a paraphrase of Ps. 44, using a characteristic phrase *iuncto latere* (l. 11), which, as Bell has pointed out, appears in many of Abelard’s writings on virgins as well as in the sequence *Virgines caste* (used at the Paraclete for all the feasts for which Abelard’s hymns for virgin martyrs are assigned).⁴⁶ While

45 Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in euangelia*, 1.11, 76. See also *Ep.* 7, 263.

46 See Bell, *Peter Abelard After Marriage*, 72–73, 230–232. Abelard’s use of the phrase appears to derive from Origen commenting on S. of S. 1.3, in Origen, *In Canticum Cantorum homiliae II* in *Origenes secundum translationem fecit Hieronymus*, ed. W. Baehrens, Griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller, Corpus berolinense 33 (Berlin: Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1925), 27–60, at 34: ‘Sponsa non post tergum sequitur, sed iuncto ingreditur latere, apprehendit dexteram sponsi et manus eius sponsi dextera continetur, famulae vero ingrediuntur post eum.’ Translation: “The *sponsa* does not follow behind, but processes at his side, she takes the right hand of the *sponsus*, and the right hand of her *sponsus* is held securely, but the handmaidens process in after him.” Abelard

other material (ll. 25–26) continues the bridal procession, paraphrasing the praise of the *sponsa* in the Song of Songs (7. 1), the theme of the double sacrifice of the virgin-martyr re-emerges with a curious reference to their reward mentioned in hymn 92 (ll. 3 and 7) as a ‘double palm’. In hymn 94, the virgin-martyr does not receive a double palm; instead, “she inherits what was mentioned above, the crowns”, garlanded with two emblems, roses for martyrs and lilies for virgins (ll. 16–22). The word ‘crowns’ is not used anywhere else in the series; however, in the passage from *Ep.* 7 on ‘bearded men’, paraphrased from Gregory, Abelard had added the phrase *frequentius ipsum gemina uirginitatis et martyrii corona pollere nouerimus* (we know it [the frail sex] has more frequently attained the double crown of virgin and martyr).⁴⁷ Twin crowns (*coronas geminas*) garlanded with roses and lilies are also mentioned in the sequence *Virgines caste* (strophes 11a–12a).⁴⁸

In the final hymn dedicated to virgin-martyrs (hymn 95), the procession leads the bride to the bed of the bridegroom. The hymn uses language such as *federata* (l. 3), *uxor* (l. 4), *federa* (l. 5), and *copula* (l. 6) that is more reminiscent of secular (legal) terms relating to marriage than terms associated with biblical epithalamica (e.g. the Song of Songs); moreover, as Abelard had clearly stated in *Ep.* 9 to the nuns of the Paraclete (quoting Jerome), “If [a virgin] should read the Song of Songs at the beginning of her studies, she might come to harm, not understanding, beneath the fleshly words, the wedding song of a spiritual marriage.”⁴⁹ The text thus offers dangerous language, but earlier admonitions in the series (hymns 89, ll. 5–6; 92, ll. 17–18) suggest that one should be able to match signs to the reality correctly. Moreover, references in this hymn (95) (e.g. the ‘bed of the heavenly bridegroom’, *celestis sponsi thoro*, l. 2, and the contrast of faith and reality, ll. 5–6) signal that its content is spiritual (anagogical). The

does not follow Origen precisely, since in the hymn the *sponsa* is the virgin-martyr, while the queen (*regina*) of Psalm 44 who holds the hand of the *sponsus* is more likely a type for the Virgin Mary.

47 As mentioned above, Abelard had already used part of the Gregory paraphrase in hymn 93, ll. 19–22.

48 Bell, *Peter Abelard After Marriage*, 117, 205, and 257–259, misses this connection because of a misreading of his principal manuscript, Paris, *Bibliothèque nationale de France*, n. a. lat. 3126, fols 84v–87r, at 86r: He reads ‘geminas’ as ‘gemmea’ thus weakening the connection of the sequence to Abelard’s writings. For an edition and translation of the text based on this manuscript, see G. Iversen and E. Kihlman, ed. and trans., “XVI *Virgines caste*,” in “Anthology of Texts and Music,” in *Sapientia et Eloquentia*, ed. G. Iversen and N. Bell, 489–492.

49 *Ep.* 9, 222: ‘si in exordio legerit, sub carnalibus uerbis spiritalium nuptiarum epithalamium non intelligens uulneretur.’

hymn continues to play upon the contrast of secular and sacred use (ll. 7–8), describing the procession as led by ‘paranymphs’, a term that in secular usage would refer to men who bring a bride to her groom from her home, but they prove to be those angels who were guardians of chastity in life. References to secular marriage are answered with a strong scriptural reference just as the virgin-martyrs enter the bridal chamber: The word *obviam* is used for them going to ‘meet’ the *sponsus* (l. 11), a use that was surely intended to call to mind the parable of the wise virgins, since they are twice said to go to meet (*obviam*) the *sponsus* at the wedding feast (Mt. 25.1, 6). The whole lection, Mt. 25.1–14, normally formed the Gospel for feasts of virgins. At this point, the hymn text not only drops the use of language evocative of secular marriage, but when the *sponsus*, described as a male virgin-martyr, embraces the virgin-martyrs (ll. 11–14), no description of the ‘joys of heaven’ is given. Instead, Abelard paraphrases 1 Cor. 2.9, which states that such joys are ineffable, though eternally prepared for those who love God (ll. 15–22).

The rhetorical strategy of the cycle of these four hymns (92–95), in celebrating the heavenly marriage of virgin-martyrs, might be expected to appeal principally to the Paraclete’s virgins, who had been consecrated to Christ as his brides. But by emphasizing the double sacrifice (both spirit and body) of virgins, Abelard stresses that the martyrdom of virgins (at the Paraclete) is entirely dependent on their constancy. Moreover, he locates the special prerogative of virgins firmly in the future, when they process at the side of the *sponsus*: until then they have not earned the double crown.

The last two hymns (96 and 97), a cycle dedicated to the feast of Mary Magdalene, when read as part of the complete series, offer a startling contrast to the hymns celebrating virgin-martyrs. Using the same terms he employed to describe the acceptable sacrifice of Jephtah’s daughter and of the virgin martyrs (*victimam* in hymn 90, l. 6; *holocaustum* in 92, l. 14, and 94, l. 4), Abelard argues that penitence may follow in lieu of sacrifice (*loco victime*, hymn 96, l. 6), and (paraphrasing Ps. 50.18–19) that “a contrite heart, a troubled spirit is more pleasing than all burnt-offerings” (ll. 7–8 *holocaustis*). Moreover, while the hymns for virgin-martyrs stress the necessity of a double sacrifice of spirit and body, hymn 96 contrasts the outward signs of Old Testament animal sacrifices with the true, inward, sacrifice of Mary Magdalene, outwardly reflected by her lamentation (ll. 9–20), and this leads to her immediate pardon (ll. 21–22): Her consequent faith and love of Christ are made visible in outward acts, but the condition of her heart, her intention, is known only to God. The following hymn (97) contrasts the ‘harsh’ outward signs of penance legislated by the church (ll. 1–6) with God’s ability to judge the heart correctly (ll. 7–12), and the exemplum of the Pharisee who ‘ignores the Lord’s mercy’ (ll. 13–14) is

provided as a warning to those who might think that they have the right to judge others (ll. 15–18).⁵⁰ The final stanza of the hymn (ll. 19–22) alludes to Mary Magdalene's life after she had been freed from her demons (ll. 19–20; Abelard's *quasi septem . . . demoniis* suggests that he interprets the demons metaphorically). She then became an exemplum of how great a faith and love one might have for Christ, a theme already covered in the series in hymn 91 (ll. 7–18), where she is established as the model of diaconal ministry towards Christ during his life, which extends even to an apostolic ministry as the first witness to the resurrection after his death.⁵¹

The conclusion of the first part of this chapter remains true: At the Paraclete, all virgins are allegorically widows, but not all widows are literally virgins. However, that conclusion can be supplemented now with the corollary that Abelard's rhetorical arguments carefully constructed in letters, sermons and hymns for the Paraclete allowed its widows to conceive of themselves allegorically as virgins: They could make a parallel offering of their hearts and spirits in 'laments of penitence', a sacrifice 'better than all burnt offerings' (an acceptable offering equal to that of virgin-martyrs), and so they too could ultimately gain entry to the marriage feast, even to the marriage bed, and to the title *sponsa Christi*. In the meantime, their status as true widows fit them for leadership of nuns, all of whom were supposed to live as good widows in this world, while the particular nun, Heloise, whom Abelard called his inseparable companion (a term he applied to Mary Magdalene's relationship to Christ), could be ratified as his consort in their sacred profession.⁵²

Abelard's Hymn Series for Holy Women (Texts and Translations)

The texts are lightly adapted from the texts given in Waddell's edition of *Hymn. Par.*, pp. 126–135; all translations are my own. All of the hymns are assigned to specific hours according to Abelard's preferences for the assignment of festal

50 The use of 'murmurat' (l. 15) and 'murmur' (l. 16) may be intended to bring to memory the frequent prohibitions of grumbling in Benedict, *The Benedictine Rule* (4.39; 5.14; 5.17–5.19; 23.1; 34.6; 35.13; 40.8–40.9; 41.5; and 53.18).

51 This presentation of Mary Magdalene is extensively developed in the Easter services at the Paraclete. See Flynn, "Letters, Liturgy, and Identity"; Flynn, "*Ductus figuratus et subtilis*"; and Bell, *Peter Abelard After Marriage*, 265–268 and 303.

52 On 'inseparable companion' (*inseparabilis comes*), see S. Valentine, "Inseparable Companions: Mary Magdalene, Abelard and Heloise," in *Negotiating Community and Difference in Medieval Europe: Gender, Power, Patronage and the Authority of Religion*, ed. K. A. Smith and S. Wells (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 151–171.

hymns stated in his second and third hymnal prefaces (see *Hymn. Par.*, ed. by Waddell, pp. 49, 89–90): Hymns assigned to the night (i.e. I Vespers and Matins) normally deal with the events (usually Old Testament typology, but also saints' lives), while those assigned to the feast-day itself (i.e. Lauds and II Vespers) deal with their interpretation (normally discussing the New Testament anti-types, or their tropological or anagogical allegories). While Abelard suggested two other patterns for his hymns for saints, both of them preserved this basic distinction between the anticipation of the feast and the feast day itself. The later sources from the Paraclete do not preserve these assignments, and it seems unlikely that Abelard's suggested patterns were ever fully implemented. None of the first four hymns (88–91) has a liturgical assignment in a later Paraclete source, even though Abelard reported that Heloise had complained of the lack of hymns for women who were neither virgins nor martyrs (see *Hymn. Par.* ed. by Waddell, p. 6). Hymn 91 may be defective (lacking a final stanza) as its refrain is tacked onto a stanza that is already metrically complete. Hymns 92 and 95 are assigned in the later sources to I and II Vespers for the following feasts: St Agnes, 21 Jan.; St Agatha, 5 Feb.; St Margaret 20 July; St Faith, 6 October; St Lucy, 13 Dec. Hymn 93 was assigned to I and II Vespers for the 11,000 virgins, 21 Oct. While hymn 94 is not assigned, the Paraclete ordinary assigns the sequence *Virgines caste*, which develops the same themes as the hymn, to the Mass for each of the feasts listed above. Hymns 96 and 97 are assigned to I and II Vespers for the feast of Mary Magdalene, 22 July, in the Paraclete Breviary. While it may be possible that Abelard wrote two further hymns for this feast, completing his normal cycle of four hymns for major feasts, only these two survive.

Hymn 88 (I Vespers)

From each of the two sexes we have taken ill, from each we have received a remedy, the man God put on in a virgin, so that men may be saved as well as women:	<i>Ab utroque sexu plagam traximus, ab utroque medelam suscepimus, uirum deus induit in uirgine, quo saluentur tam uiri quam femine:</i>
5 Salvation arose from a woman; from where sin began, grace began.	<i>orta salus est ex femina; unde culpa cepit gratia.</i>
Wherefore, after sin, this sex was viler; by nature it was weaker; yet, through it, divine mercy	<i>Quo post culpam sexus hic abiectior per naturam fuerat inferior, hoc nimirum diuina clementia</i>

- 10 raised the sex to greater grace: *hunc maiori sublimauit gratia*
 Consider this sex, from his virgin mother *quod ab eius matre uirgine*
 down through each and every rank. *per singulos gradus inspicere.*
- Who can count the choirs of virgins,
 of the saints imitating her?
- 15 Who does not know that after these
 there are countless
 widows embracing a sacred vow? *Quis sanctaram eam emulantium,*
numerare possit choro uirginum?
 Nor do they lack marriage, *post has esse quis nescit innumeras*
 who burn with this desire. *sacrum uotum amplectantes uiduas?*
nec deesse matrimonio,
que flagrent hoc desiderio.
- After all these, if I may consider harlots,
 20 joining the Egyptian to the Magdalene,
 where fault first overflowed,
 I discern that virtue welled up later:
 To him be honour, to him be glory,
 who does so many wonders. *Post has omnes, si scorta respiciam,*
magdalene iungens egiptiacam,
ubi culpa prius habundauerat,
cerno quia uirtus post exuberat:
Ipsi decus, ipsi gloria,
qui tot facit mirabilia.

Hymn 89 (Matins)

- Sacred histories teach us,
 through manifold types of events,
 with what virtue or honour
 each rank of their sex should be provided,
 5 after the unique honour of the Virgin,
 who so excels that she is Mother of God. *Post honorem singularem uirginis,*
que sic pollet, ut sit dei genitrix,
qua uirtute uel honore predicti
sint istius gradus sexus singuli,
multiplici rerum specie,
sacre docent nos hystorie.
- Paradise's first inhabitant, Adam,
 was made outside it; woman was made
 within,
 so that even the place would be a proof for
 her:
 10 how excellent the creation of women is;
 and they, fashioned from man's rib,
 would prove strong as bone. *Paradisi primus adam incola*
extra factus fuit intus femina,
ut et locus ipsi sit inditio,
quam excellens harum sit creatio.
que de costa uiri condite
fortes essent uelut osseae.
- This strength rushed into many things
 when the courage of men dried up; *Hec in multis fortitudo irruit,*
cum uirorum uirtus exaruerit;

- 15 for example, Deborah stands out as judge, *in exemplo prestat iudex debora*
 and the widow who laid Holfernes low, *et que strauit holofernem uidua,*
 and the famous mother of seven brothers, *sollemnemque missam merita*
 worthy of a solemn mass. *septem fratrum mater inclita.*
- The daughter of victorious Jephtah gave *Iepte nata uictoris in proprium*
 up the breath
- 20 in her own throat into her father's right *patris dextram animauit iugulum,*
 hand,
 choosing death instead of favour; *mori magis eligens quam gratiam*
 through a vow, the father cheated himself *uoto pater fraudet sibi prestitam.*
 out of his dearest.
- To him be honour, to him be glory, *Ipsi decus, ipsi gloria,*
 who does so many wonders. *qui tot facit mirabilia.*

Hymn (90) Lauds

- If one should compare women to men *Si cum uiris feminas contendere*
 regarding the power of their constancy, *de uirtute liceat constantie,*
 What man could equal the strength *quis uirorum mentis fortitudine*
 of mind of Jephtah's daughter, *adequari possit iepte filie,*
- 5 who, so that her father should not be guilty *que ne uoti pater reus sit,*
 over his vow,
 offered herself to her father as a sacrifice? *se uictimam patri prebuit?*
- What would be accomplished by the *Quid fecisset in agone martirum,*
 suffering of martyrs
 if they were compelled to deny the Lord? *si negare cogeretur dominum?*
 Hence, the great constancy in a virgin *unde tanta uirginis constantia*
 10 is potent with a spiritual grace, *quadam pollet spiritali gratia,*
 so that solemn hymns of virgins *ut sollemnes hymni uirginum,*
 may adorn a virginal end. *uirgineum colant exitum.*
- Many men, in outstanding deeds, *Multi uiri factis excellentibus*
 have freed the faithful from the enemy; *liberarunt fideles ab hostibus;*
- 15 Esther, alone, by liberating her people, *hester sola liberando populum*
 thence deserved a festive proclamation, *hinc festiuum meruit preconium,*
 so that what is outstanding, *ut scilicet, quam emineat*
 namely, women's virtue, may be made *feminarum uirtus pateat.*
 manifest.

- Indeed, in so far as their sex is weak,
 20 by the same degree its virtue is wonderful;
 a proclamation of greater praise goes forth
 to raise woman to the highest distinction:
 To him be honour, to him be glory,
 who does so many wonders.
- Quantum quippe sexus his est
 fragilis,
 eo uirtus ipsius mirabilis,
 maius laudis exigit preconium
 in precelsum erigenda titulum:
 Ipsi decus, ipsi gloria,
 qui tot facit mirabilia.*

Hymn 91 (II Vespers)

- As we arrive at our own time,
 which has overflowed with divine favour,
 who will not be able to gather from many
 examples,
 that women in these times have excelled:
 5 After Mary, then gazing at Anna,
 also contemplating Elizabeth?
- Ut ad nostra ueniamus tempora,
 que diuina superfudit gratia,
 quis in ista feminas precellere
 non ualebit ex multis colligere,
 post mariam annam intuens,
 elizabeth quoque contuens?*
- A woman held Christ's feet; anointing
 them
 corporeally, she made him the
 anointed—Christ;
 it is evident that he received the mysteries
 10 of priest and king from a woman,
 and the sex that bore him
 also handed down the sacraments.
- Christi pedes capit unguens mulier,
 christum eum fecit corporaliter;
 sacerdotis et regis misteria
 suscepisse constat hunc a femina,
 et qui eum sexus peperit,
 sacramenta quoque tradidit.*
- And, here, bearing spices at the tomb,
 she was the first to see the joys of him
 rising,
 15 and the woman who was more worthless
 because of sin preceded all others in this
 grace,
 so that it would be clear with what
 great joy
 conversion is for sinners.
 To him be honour, to him be glory,
 20 who does so many wonders.
- Et sepulto ferens hic aromata
 resurgentis prior uidit gaudia,
 et ex culpa uilis magis femina,
 in hac omnes antecessit gratia,
 ut pateat quanto gaudio
 peccantium sit conuersio.
 Ipsi decus, ipsi gloria,
 qui tot facit mirabilia.*

Hymn 92 (I Vespers)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>The bride of Christ is as much a virgin as
a martyr,
whose palm of victory is this festive day;
a double palm redoubles the propitious
feast:
the virgin conquers the flesh, the martyr,
the enemy;
5 and because of this, let psalms resound,
and then let readings thunder.</p> | <p><i>Sponsa christi tam uirgo quam
martir est,
cuius palma celebris haec dies est;
palma duplex festum presens
geminat,
uirgo carnem, martir hostem
superat;
hinc igitur psalmi resonent,
lectiones inde concrepent.</i></p> |
| <p>This double palm, rarer in men,
shines forth more abundantly in women,
so that the more their sex is the weaker
10 so the more marvelous is their virtue,
and their sacrifice is more pleasing,
the more it is pure.</p> | <p><i>Hec in uiris duplex palma ravior
eminet in feminis uberior,
ut quo sexus harum est infirmior,
sic ipsarum uirtus mirabilior,
et ipsarum tanto gratior
sit hostia, quanto purior.</i></p> |
| <p>Unmarred as much in spirit as in body,
a true sacrifice comes from a virgin;
15 bring the type of this sacrifice,
the red and tender calf, for burning;
there, the shadow, but here, the truth,
if you match well the reality with
the signs.</p> | <p><i>Integra tam spiritu quam corpore,
holocaustum uerum fit ex uirgine;
ad incensum huius refer hostiae
rufae tipum et tenellae uitulae;
illic umbra sed hic ueritas,
si re signis bene conferas.</i></p> |
| <p>What the heart had consecrated to God
through itself,
20 now let the body also sacrifice through
the executioner;
the heart, first consecrated to God,
undaunted, brings forth the body of the
victim.
To him be honour, to him be glory,
who does so many wonders.</p> | <p><i>Que cor deo per se consecrauerat,
per lictorem nunc et corpus
immolat,
consecratus deo primum animus
hosti corpus exponit intrepidus.</i></p> <p><i>Ipsi decus, ipsi gloria,
qui tot facit mirabilia.</i></p> |

Hymn 93 (Matins)

<p>Since God is marvelous in his saints, he excels in the victories of martyrs, but when he grants this victory to women, who would not prefer this grace to all others, 5 so that the more frail the sex is, the more wondrous is this power?</p>	<p><i>Cum in sanctis deus sit mirabilis preminet in martirum uictoriis; sed cum hanc dat feminis uictoriam quis non cunctis preferat hanc gratiam, ut quo sexus est fragilior, hoc sit uirtus mirabilior?</i></p>
<p>The constancy of women overcomes the most carefully devised types of torture, whether it is that their virtue is wondrous, 10 or that the burden of the hours of their agonies is light; or that both, we believe, are better managed as God allots.</p>	<p><i>Exquisita tormentorum genera feminarum superat constantia, aut istarum uirtus est mirabilis, aut agonum horum pena facilis. sed utrumque geri melius disponente deo credimus.</i></p>
<p>Like death, love is strong, and its fire is not snuffed out; 15 many waters cannot quench the flame of entirely unconquerable love: and with this love, the sex is never feeble, however frail.</p>	<p><i>Valida est sicut mors dilectio nec istius ignis est extinctio; aque multe non possunt exstinguere caritatis flammam inuictissime; nec est umquam cum hac debilis sexus quantum—cumque fragilis.</i></p>
<p>What are youths to call bearded men, 20 when tender virgins endure these things? The stronger sex should blush at this, when the weaker endures so much. To him be honour, to him be glory, who does so many wonders.</p>	<p><i>Quid barbati dicturi sunt iuuenes, delicate cum hec ferant uirgines? erubescat ad hec sexus fortior, ubi tanta sustinet infirmior. Ipsi decus, ipsi gloria, qui tot facit mirabilia.</i></p>

Hymn 94 (Lauds)

- Her life, as much as her death, has taught
of what worth this faithful woman is to
her bridegroom;
preserving her body untouched,
offering it as her burnt-offering;
5 she is a virgin bride; he is a virgin
bridegroom;
she, a bride, is a martyr; he, a bridegroom,
is a martyr. *Quantum sponso fidelis hec fuerit,
tam ipsius uita quam mors docuit;
illa corpus integrum custodiens,
hec ipsius holocaustum offerens,
uirgo sponsa uirgo sponsus est;
sponsa martir, sponsus martir
est.*
- For such a bridegroom, such a bride is
proper,
and she has followed him wherever he has
gone,
and the beauty of sacred flesh shall not
separate them,
10 nor in death will unequal love be revealed;
let other women follow the bridegroom,
she processes at his side. *Talem sponsum talis sponsa decuit,
que secuta sit, quocumque ierit,
quos nec sacre carnis decor diuidat,
nec in morte dispar amor pateat;
subsecuntur sponsum ceterae,
hec incedit iuncto latere.*
- And the queen, holding the right hand of
the bridegroom,
has another throng following;
15 she shines in golden vesture
and inherits what was mentioned above—
the crowns;
their gold is clearly the choicest,
it is pure and glowing. *Et regina sponsi tenens dexteram,
subsequentem turbam habet
ceteram;
in uestitu deaurato renitet
et coronas supradictas possidet;
certe aurum hoc est optimum,
incorruptum est et rutilum.*
- They are the emblem of martyr and virgin,
20 a wreath woven from roses and lilies.
A martyr presents a rose, a virgin, a lily,
with the most sweet aroma of Christ;
let their garments render emblems:
white shining linen, red royal-purple. *Sertum rosis intextum et liliis
sunt insigne martiris et uirginis;
in odorem christo suauissimum
martir rosam, uirgo profert lilium;
indumenta dant insignia,
candens bissus, rubra purpura.*

- 25 Their feet are beautiful in shoes, *Pulchri gressus eius sunt in calceis,*
 which even the bridegroom commends *quos et sponsus conlaudat in*
 in canticles; *canticis;*
 who may be her adornment has been *quis sit eius ornatus predictum est*
 foretold,
 and how he may be her increase should *quo sit eius progressus dicendum est;*
 be told.
 To him be honour, to him be glory, *Ipsi decus, ipsi gloria,*
 30 who does so many wonders. *qui tot facit mirabilia.*

Hymn 95 (II Vespers)

- Rising, like the dawn, she advances, *Ut aurora consurgens progreditur,*
 and is joined in marriage in the heavenly *que celestis sponsi thoro iungitur,*
 groom's bed.
 Here, as a bride, she was betrothed, *hic ut sponsa federata fuerat,*
 there as wife, now she dwells; *illic tamquam uxor iam cohabitat;*
 5 here, by faith, a betrothal was made *hic in fide facta federa*
 there, in reality, eternally conjoined. *illic in re perpes copula.*
- There, she has the angels as bridesmen, *Paranimphos illic habet angelos,*
 whom, here, she had as her own guardians; *quos custodes habuit hic proprios;*
 the angelic procession leads her *ad superna thalamorum gaudia*
 10 to the supernal joys of the bridal chamber: *illam pompa deducit angelica;*
 hence a virgin goes to meet virgins, *hinc obuiam uirgo uirgines,*
 thence a martyr embraces martyrs. *illinc martir habet martires.*
- Thus led, when she comes to the *Cum ad sponsum sic deducta uenerit*
 bridegroom
 and rests in his embrace, *et in eius complexu quieuerit,*
 15 who could say what glory she enjoys, *qua fruatur gloria quis dixerit,*
 what mind could conceive of such great joy? *que mens tanta gaudia conceperit?*
 Surely, nobody is capable of these things, *ad hec certe nemo sufficit*
 unless, perhaps, when she experiences them. *nisi forte cum hec senserit.*
- These are the things that the eye does not *Hec sunt illa que non uidit oculus*
 see,
 20 nor can they be comprehended by human *nec humanis capi possunt cordibus,*
 hearts,

and God himself offers them,
prepared from everlasting, to those who
love him.

To him be honour, to him be glory,
who does so many wonders.

*que se deus prebet diligentibus,
ab eternis parata temporibus;*

*Ipsi decus, ipsi gloria,
qui tot facit mirabilia.*

Hymn 96 (I Vespers)

The solemn feast of a blessed sinner
especially gladdens sinners;
after her, none should despair of pardon,
however much disgrace has gone before,
5 if laments of penitence
follow in lieu of sacrifice.

*Peccatricis beate sollemnitatis,
peccatores maxime letificat,
post hanc nemo desperet de uenia,
quantumcumque precedant flagitia,
si lamenta penitentiae
subsequentur loco victimae.*

A contrite heart, a troubled spirit,
is more pleasing than all burnt offerings;
here, each person slaughters vices
inwardly;
10 there, animals are slaughtered outwardly;
here, each sacrifices herself;
there, instead, she sacrifices others.

*Cor contritum tribulatus spiritus
holocaustis gratius est omnibus;
ibi quisque mactat intus vicia,
hic mactantur foris animalia;
ibi quisque se sacrificat,
hic aliud pro se immolat.*

Here, the truth of the matter exists,
there, the falsification of a type,
15 here, the body, there, the shadow of a
body,
which endures when the shadow has
vanished,
revealing this: A blessed whore has offered
the things themselves instead of their signs.

*Ibi rerum est ipsarum veritas,
hic figure quedam [...] falsitas;
ibi corpus hic est umbra corporis;
illud manet cum hec euauerit;
hoc exhibens felix meretrix
res pro signis ipsas obtulit.*

The fatted sacrifice of weeping,
20 the bone-deep offering of wailing,
achieve much in little time,
and immediately pardon is granted.
To him be honour, to him be glory,
regarding his great favour.

*Lachrimarum pingue sacrificium,
medullatum holocaustum fletuum,
multa breui consummarunt tempora
impetrata statim indulgentia.
Ipsi decus, ipsi gloria,
super eius tanta gratia.*

Hymn 97 (II Vespers)

<p>The harsh correction of penitents and their lengthy reparation subdue the flesh through frequent fasts, and torment it with rough hair shirts: 5 And shame dismays those cast out of the church.</p>	<p><i>Penitentum seuera correptio et eorum longa satisfactio crebris carnem edomant ieiuniis, asperisque cruciant ciliciis: et eiectos ab ecclesia confudit erubescencia.</i></p>
<p>In her case, nothing was done through this rite; one realises that God is milder than man; the king and likewise judge tempers his law; 10 nor does he, who truly judges the heart, attend as much to the length of time as to the intensity of grief.</p>	<p><i>In hac nichil actum est hoc ordine, mitiorem deum sensit homine; rex et iudex idem legem temperat, nec attendit, qui cor vere iudicat tam temporis longitudinem quam doloris magnitudinem.</i></p>
<p>The Pharisee regards the Lord's mercy, which he ignores, as ignorance; 15 within himself, while he grumbles about this woman, the heart's judge adjudicates this grumbling, so that to the many gathered he will say why she deserves his pardon.</p>	<p><i>Phariseus domini clementiam, quam ignorat, credit ignorantiam, et intra se dum super hanc murmurat, iudex cordis murmur hoc diiudicat, vt collatis multis dixerit, cur veniam hec meruerit.</i></p>
<p>And having freed her from the bonds of many sins, 20 as if from seven demons, he taught, as much through blessing as through judgment, of what great worth her faith became, of what great worth her love: To him be honour, to him be glory, regarding his great favour.</p>	<p><i>Quam multorum peccatorum vinculis, quasi septem absoluens demoniis, quanti fides, quanti fit dilectio tam felici docuit iudicio. Ipsi decus, ipsi gloria, super eius tanta gratia.</i></p>

Trapping the Future: Abelard's Multi-Layered Image-Building

Wim Verbaal

Abelard is an icon. Ten years before the student revolts of '68, the famous French medievalist Jacques Le Goff presented Peter Abelard as 'the first great representative of the modern intellectual—within the limits of modernity of the twelfth century': *Abélard, c'est le premier professeur*.¹ Without explicitly stating it, the text reveals what made Le Goff consider Abelard to be this forerunner in modern academics, constantly stirring up ideas, giving birth to passionate discussions, feeling the need to tear down all idols, refuting that which might seem to restrict him, wishing for the woman at his side to achieve the sense of fulfilment he had found himself.² Thus, he holds up Abelard as the arch-model for generations of intellectuals to come to make them meet his own, Le Goff's, expectations.

Le Goff was not the first to make use of the powerful image reflected by Peter Abelard. In 1697, Pierre Bayle published the first edition of his *Dictionnaire historique et critique*. In the two lemma's on Bernard of Clairvaux and Berengarius of Poitiers, he focuses on the treatment Abelard suffered at the hands of the abbot, in order to tarnish the latter's position as patron saint of the French kingdom. Bayle himself had been expelled from this same kingdom of France by the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. So he presented Abelard as the intellectual martyr of Sciences, a victim of radical and ignorant intolerance, as he considered himself to be.³

But Abelard did not only reflect endangered or revolutionary reason. He was also a lover, martyred to his love for Heloise. Both lovers were re-united in the same tomb at the Paraclete and, when in 1790 it had been decided that

1 Jacques Le Goff, *Les intellectuels au moyen âge* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), 40.

2 Ibid., 40–47.

3 Pierre Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique* I, 536–538 and 526–529, 1740 ed., <http://artfl-project.uchicago.edu/content/dictionnaire-de-bayle> (accessed 12 april 2012); Marie-Elisabeth Montulet-Henneau, "Bernard de Clairvaux. Du Classicisme aux Lumières: Destin d'une oeuvre, image d'un homme," in *Vies et légendes de saint Bernard*, ed. Patrick Arabeyre, Jacques Berlioz, and Philippe Holthof (Cîteaux: Commentarii Cistercienses, 1993), 291–305, esp. 298–300; Bernard Plongeron, "Lumières contre épopée mystique: Les 'Lectures' de saint Bernard du XVII^e au XIX^e siècle," 306–327, esp. 307–309.

the monastery was to be demolished, the French Revolution ensured that their bodies were saved. They were transferred from one tomb to another and guarded as relics of the Romantic era, until they eventually found their resting-place at the cemetery of Père Lachaise in 1817, where they are still the destination of many a pilgrim of either love or reason.

So yes, Abelard is an icon and his iconic value seems to have become one of the most important parts of his legacy to modern times. Icons are characterized by their sacrosanctity in form and significance. They are not open to criticism, as even the mildest comment is easily taken as an attempt at sacrilege, resulting in the fiercest of confrontations between *iconodouloi* and iconoclasts. What other reason could there have been for the sharp reactions, or even the aggressive violence when, in the last decade, a number of anonymous love-letters were once again attributed to Abelard and Heloise?⁴ Even if the attribution of the *Epistulae duorum amantium* had been met with general approval, what would it have changed in our knowledge of Abelard and Heloise? Would it have improved our insight into their story? Was not rather the attribution only advanced because the epistolary exchange seemed to reflect what we already know—or think we know—about these lovers? So for what other reason has this thesis been refuted with such violence, other than the assumption that the pathos of these letters would stain the iconic status of both Abelard and Heloise?

Similarly, what could be the reason for the relative lack of resonance of serious scholarly efforts such as Robert-Henri Bautier's study on Abelard's political connections to the faction adhering to the Garlande family?⁵ All recent major studies on Abelard mention the article in question, though mostly only

4 For an overview of the violence of the scientific debate on both sides, see the extensive overview of the argument in Peter von Moos, "Abaelard, Heloise und ihr Paraklet: Ein Kloster nach Maß. Zugleich eine Streitschrift gegen die ewige Wiederkehr hermeneutischer Naivität," in *Peter von Moos: Gesammelte Studien zum Mittelalter*, ed. Gert Melville, Bd I (Münster: Lit, 2005), 233–301, notably Excursus 2, 282–292. Von Moos, "Abaelard, Heloise und ihr Paraklet," also available in *Das Eigene und das Ganze: Zum Individuellen im mittelalterlichen Religiosentum*, ed. Gert Melville and Markus Schürer (Münster, Hamburg, and London: 2002), 563–619. Without wanting to take any position in the debate, one cannot help but feel some kind of stupefaction that serious academicians can be brought to such aggression. Marenbon, "Lost Love Letters?," 267–280 offers a more moderate survey.

5 Robert-Henri Bautier, "Paris au temps d'Abélard," in *Abélard en son temps*, ed. Jean Jolivet, Actes du Colloque international organisé à l'occasion du 9e centenaire de la naissance de Pierre Abélard (14–19 mai 1979) (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1981), 21–77. Several modern scholars however have indeed taken Bautier's conclusions into account, notably Mews in most of his articles.

indirectly.⁶ Meanwhile, its important implications seem to attract no attention at all. Surveys of Abelard's life continue to rephrase his own account, explaining his actions and choices in the words Abelard used to present them.⁷ His words are thus taken at face value and preferred to the results of scholarly research, causing the embarrassment sometimes experienced within Abelardian scholarship.⁸ Once again, the sole motivation behind it seems to be to protect the icon Abelard from cracks in its iconic significance. Abelard lending himself to political tactics would damage his value as an independent, even revolutionary intellectual or lover. Modern scholarship clearly feels a need for its own saints and idols.

Abelard's iconic image is not however a recent phenomenon. Already during his own lifetime, he had become something of an icon. For John of Salisbury, Master Peter personified a living legend of learning. When he came to study in Paris in 1136, he first joined the classes of Abelard, the *Peripateticus Palatinus*, who was at that time teaching at the Mont-Sainte-Geneviève. For John, Abelard was the *clarus doctor et admirabilis*, illustrious and admirable, whose words he absorbed while sitting at his feet, learning the first principles of *dialectica*.⁹

However, as far as we know, during this period Abelard was primarily occupied by his teachings on *sacra pagina*, on theology.¹⁰ Did he still teach introductory courses in dialectics, as John suggests? In fact, one might even be sceptical about John's sincerity: was he truly attracted by Abelard's teaching? He calls him *clarus et admirabilis*, both words referring more to Abelard's fame than to his actual learning.¹¹ John came to hear the legend, the living icon.

6 The article is mentioned twice briefly in Clanchy, *Abelard*, 67 and 142.

7 John Marenbon, "Life, Milieu, and Intellectual Contexts," in *The Cambridge Companion to Abelard*, ed. Jeffrey Brower and Kevin Guilfooy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 13–44, esp. 14–16 offers a nice example thereof, giving an abbreviation of Abelard's own account in the *HC*, although in an endnote the author warns that "it must be used with caution." See *ibid.*, 39, n. 1. A warning, however, he does not seem to heed himself.

8 Babette Hellemans, "The 'Whole Abelard' and the Availability of Language," in *How the West Was Won: Essays on Literary Imagination, the Canon, and the Christian Middle Ages for Burcht Pranger*, ed. Willemien Otten, Arjo Vanderjagt, and Hent De Vries (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 349–376, esp. 354–358 and n. 13.

9 John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon*, 2.10.

10 Constant J. Mews, "In Search of a Name and Its Significance: A Twelfth Century Anecdote About Thierry and Peter Abaelard," *Traditio* 44 (1988), 171–200.

11 This becomes clear when comparing the other appearances of both words in the *Metalogicon*. *Admirabilis* appears only in this description of Abelard, whereas *clarus* is used first of all in the sense of illustrious, famous, or deserving of fame and means only in a second sense 'clear.'

He did not come to learn at his school. When Abelard left Paris, probably for political reasons¹², he did not follow him as other students had done some ten years before. He simply chose another master.¹³ An icon is admired and adored. All too often, it is not followed.

Indeed, as an intellectual, Abelard was overtaken by time.¹⁴ He came to represent the undeniable 'culmination' of the *logica vetus*, the old logic that was slowly replaced from the 1130s onward by the new logic, based on the recent translations of Aristotle.¹⁵ Abelard himself had apparently come into contact with these new writings¹⁶, but they did not interest him.¹⁷ His focus on the science of the past may have been one of the most important reasons for his becoming 'outdated' so soon. His influence on the intellectual movements of the later twelfth century was more indirect than direct and his fame as the legend of learning faded within a decade of his death.

History did not hold everlasting glory in store for Abelard the intellectual based on his scientific works, but it did so for Abelard the lover, based on his exchange of letters with Heloise. The first to distil the icon of the unfortunate lover(s) from these letters was the French poet Jean de Meung. In his continuation of Guillaume de Lorris' *Roman de la Rose*, a prominent place is reserved for both, though especially for Heloise, because of her refusal to marry Abelard. Jean employs the character of Abelard only as the ardent lover, who had done better to listen to Heloise. She is the only female authority invoked by the poet

12 In 1137, at the death of King Louis VI, Abelard's patron Stephen de Garlande definitively lost all influence and retired into the monastery of St Victor. See Bautier, "Paris au temps," 77; Clanchy, *Abelard*, 342–343; and Éric Bournazel, *Louis VI le Gros* (Paris: Fayard, 2007), 364–365.

13 François Lejeune, "Pierre Abélard et Jean de Salisbury: *Metalogicon* II, 10," in *Pierre Abélard: Colloque international de Nantes (3–4 octobre 2001)*, ed. Jean Jolivet and Henri Habrias (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2003), 63–75 notes John's distance in front of Abelard, but Lejeune seeks to explain it by intellectual reasons. John's acquaintance with Abelard's learning, however, need not be based upon any actual teaching of the master. He can simply have consulted his books. John's account does not give the impression that he had the chance of attending Abelard's classes very often or for very long. Nor does he give the idea that he had been more impressed by the master's teaching than by his fame.

14 Mews, "In Search of a Name."

15 Norman Kretzmann, "The Culmination of the Old Logic in Peter Abelard," in *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, ed. Robert L. Benson and Giles Constable (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 488–511.

16 Kretzmann, "The Culmination," 490, n. 10; *Dial.*, available in L. M. de Rijk, ed., *Dialectica*, by Petrus Abaelardus (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1956), xvi–xix.

17 Mews, "In Search of a Name."

in his polemic against marriage, and she earns his fullest praise: never again has the world seen a woman like her. Thanks to her learning, she knew how to overcome and to subdue her natural inclination towards the wiles of women.¹⁸

A second famous reader of the lovers' correspondence was Francesco Petrararch, who owned his own copy, the margins of which he filled with comments. Yet, in his own writings, it is neither the lover that he seems most impressed by, nor the scholarly intellectual. Abelard is mentioned in his *De vita solitaria* for his retirement into solitude and the concourse of students he managed to draw towards him.¹⁹ In Petrarch's view, Abelard was the only recent example of the necessity of solitude for philosophers, and was thus placed at the same level as Socrates, Aristotle and other ancient philosophers, who are named just before him.

Yet neither Jean de Meung nor Petrarca seem to have considered Abelard as the icon he was to become, as the untouchable 'sign' pointing the way towards an even more incorporeal truth. For Jean, he is just one of several figures in his allegorical battle concerned with love. For Petrarca, he is a recent example of the old philosophical need for solitude, though not even without some 'flaws,' such as a lack of humility. Only with John do we see Abelard portrayed as a true icon, one he had come to admire from overseas, not very unlike Dante's pilgrim, to whom the poet compares himself when admiring the living charity of Bernard of Clairvaux.²⁰ Is it an accident that, of all people, it was the scholar and student John that seems to come closest to the modern iconic appreciation of Abelard? In any case, it confirms the already mentioned need for academics to have their own patron saints and martyrs.

Rhetoric and Scholarship

Persecuted intellectual, martyr of Reason, martyr of Love, first professor, philosopher of solitude, patron of student revolts, champion of female emancipation

18 Jean de Meung, *Roman de la rose*, 8825–8830, online text of the Project Gutenberg, produced by Marc D'Hooghe, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/16816/16816-pdf.pdf> (accessed 20 October 2013).

19 Francesco Petrarca, *De vita solitaria*, ed. Guido Martelotti (Milan and Naples: Riccardo Ricciardi Editori, 1955), 2.12.

20 Dante, *Paradiso* 31, 103–111. Note that both John and Dante use the same verb in Latin and Italian to express the impression their respective icons leave on them. To John, Abelard is the 'clarus doctor et admirabilis.' Upon hearing Bernard's name, Dante's *persona* remains like the Croatian pilgrim 'mirando la vivace' / 'carità' of Bernard.

and the freedom of thought: Abelard seems to have incorporated all of these. Such are the golden lines by which his image is fixed and presented to the eyes of the modern, while those colours that do not clearly fit into the picture are delicately retouched. Abelard the political intriguer, participant in the factional movements of Stephen de Garlande, Abelard the rhetorician, manipulator of his readers' minds through the art of language, Abelard the conservative cleric, opponent of contemporary reform movements while adhering to older pre-Gregorian secular church politics: these are only some of the elements missing in the general picture of Abelard's life, work and thought. Not accidentally, though: these are the elements Abelard himself tried to avoid or refute in his own writings.

Thus he is still accepted as the most reliable witness to his own life, and his words are taken as the irrefutable expression of factual truth. As if Abelard only wished to give testimony of his deeds and acts without any particular *intention* in writing what he wrote. Does he himself not advise, in the rightly famous prologue to his *Sic et non*, that a text be judged more according to the intention of the writer (*iuxta intentionem loquentis*) than to the quality of what he wrote (*secundum qualitatem locutionis*)?²¹ How can it be then that Abelard is still simply taken at his word and not at his 'intention,' or in terms more in conformance with modern literary sciences, why has so little attention gone to the supposed functioning of his texts?

The problem here might in fact be the principally historical and philosophical scholarly approaches to Abelard's writings, the former looking for facts, the latter for consistent structures, while both largely ignoring the rhetorical skills and techniques applied in his writing. Perhaps it seems valid to neglect this important feature of twelfth-century writing because of Abelard's own attacks on rhetoric, notably in his letter to Heloise, prefatory to his collection of sermons. For here, he states that he has always dedicated himself more to teaching than to preaching (*plus quippe lectioni quam sermoni deditus*). For this reason, he claims to focus now on plain exposition, not on eloquent composition (*expositionis insisto planitiam, non eloquentiae compositionem*), on factual discernment, not on rhetorical ornament (*sensum litterae, non ornatum rhetoricae*)²²—a statement elegantly undermined by its own contrived manner of composition!

Admittedly Abelard knew how to write. Beyond doubt he takes his place among the most accomplished writers of his age, and to presume that he had not enjoyed a sound grammatical education, acquiring a firm and exten-

21 *Sic et non*, ed. Boyer and McKeon (1976–1977), Prol., esp. 96.

22 See Victor Cousin, ed., *Sermones, Ep., ad Heloissam*, by Petrus Abaelardus, in *Opera*, vol. 1 (Paris: A. Durand, 1849), 350.

sive knowledge of the normative writers of Antiquity and their writing skills, betrays great naivety.²³ Abelard therefore needs to be approached as a writer. His texts need to be analysed as literary artefacts, rather than the historical documents for which they have all too often been taken. This implies two different kinds of readerships that rarely see eye to eye, says Michael Clanchy:

As in other areas of medieval studies, the interpretations of historians differ here from those of specialists in language and literature. The historian is trained to search for a single factual narrative in a text like *Historia calamitatum*, whereas the literary specialist will question—sometimes perversely in the historian's opinion—whether there is a single meaning in the text or any clear dividing line between fact and fiction.²⁴

'Perversely' questioning the text must indeed be the task when dealing with a writer of Abelard's calibre if we are to avoid a *truly* perverse extrapolation of what is written in words to what is written in the historical mind.

The Problem of the *Historia calamitatum*

As can be noted in the above-mentioned quotation, the great stumbling block in Abelardian scholarship remains his assumed autobiography, the so-called *Historia calamitatum*. This text indeed constitutes a kind of *monstrum*, an indefinable peculiarity compared to contemporaneous writing, surely in Latin writing up to the twelfth century and beyond. It undeniably has an autobiographical slant. Yet to consider it a true autobiography, that is, a text with the obvious intention to offer insight into its writer's life, is more than hazardous. Any purely autobiographical discourse seems completely out of place in twelfth-century writing, in which any cult of the historical 'ego', as it should be implied in a true autobiographical stand, misses any authoritative basis.

For this reason, the *Historia calamitatum* is sometimes considered as an apologetic or confessional text, or both.²⁵ Or its epistolary frame is taken

23 Marenbon, "Life, Milieu," 24.

24 Michael Clanchy, "Abelard—Knight (Miles), Courtier (Palatinus) and Man of War (Vir Bellator)," in *Medieval Knighthood V: Papers from the sixth Strawberry Hill Conference 1994*, ed. Stephen Church and Ruth Harvey (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1995), 101–118, esp. 101–102.

25 Winthrop Wetherbee, "Literary Works," in *The Cambridge Companion to Abelard*, ed. Jeffrey Brower and Kevin Guilfooy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 45–64, esp. 56.

seriously so that the autobiographical account seems to take on a consolatory dimension. This last approach usually passes by the problem of the text's functioning, for in that case it can simply be considered a private letter that by chance has become public. However such an assumption means a complete denial of writing and reading customs in the early twelfth century.²⁶ Writing was no private matter, at least as far as it concerns the texts that have been preserved. That other 'autobiographical' writer, Guibert of Nogent, offers a nice example thereof. When writing love poetry as a young man, he claims, he did not dare to let them be read by anyone, while he actually read them out aloud whenever he could under a suppositious name to enjoy the praise they received.²⁷ In the end, however, these poems were lost, because Guibert did not want them known and took no care to ensure their publication or conservation. Those texts that we still possess *did* undergo similar kind of editing care and thus had a reason to exist - they had a function to fulfil.²⁸

The problem with the *Historia calamitatum* is exactly that it does not fit easily into any traditional literary functioning of twelfth-century writing. It just seems to slip from all known categories, which causes an even greater problem in view of the general tendency of medieval writing to comply at least formally to standards and traditions, even when playing with them. Two attempts have been made to give the *Historia calamitatum* a place in the known literary categories. Winthrop Wetherbee links it to both confessional and apologetic literature.²⁹ Notably with regard to its apologetic character, he has a strong point. Abelard clearly wrote the text with the intention of defending his lasting occupation with the Paraclete and Heloise's community. Yet, even then, the question remains open—for whom was it intended? What was its concrete purpose? In what way did he intend it to function as a text?

Peter von Moos has given a more general explanation of the text, of its functioning and aims. He sees it closely connected with the entire correspondence as well as with Abelard's other writings for Heloise's community: the hymns, the sermons, and the *Problemata*. According to his interpretation, it is consonant with an overall project of both Abelard and Heloise to provide the

26 Von Moos, "Abaelard, Heloise und ihr Paraklet" (2005), 234 and 240–241.

27 Guibert of Nogent, *Monodia*, ed. Edmond-René Labande (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1981), 1.17.

28 Which is indeed the strongest argument against the conservation of so-called 'private' correspondences, as is strongly stressed by von Moos, "Abaelard, Heloise und ihr Paraklet."

29 Wetherbee, "Literary Works," 56.

Paraclete with the fundamental textual basis, necessary for the spiritual sanity and the functioning of the community.³⁰

But even in that case, many questions remain, as Peter von Moos himself admits, especially regarding the *Historia calamitatum*. What could be its spiritual intention, notably in the monastic sense, since the text was incorporated into a monastic corpus? Because there are no external indications that might inform us, all speculations have to start with the text itself, trying to extract from it all the information it might contain. So let us try once again to read the text, not for its supposed facts, but rather for the way it functions, for the way its words are chosen and for the way it is composed.

A Multi-Layered Voice

Every reader, who is slightly acquainted with early twelfth-century literature, should be baffled by the opening sentences of Abelard's account. There is little reason to suspect his contemporaries were less perplexed. Leaving aside, for the time being, the anonymous addressee and the short epistle-like opening, the actual story takes off stunningly: "I thus" / *Ego igitur*. As far as I know this astonishing opening has not yet received the attention it deserves. To the modern reader's eyes, it would perhaps hardly be striking to encounter this prominently placed 'I' / 'EGO' at the beginning of a text considered beforehand to be autobiographical. But as mentioned before, the autobiographical assumption in itself already causes many a problem with its contemporary context. When comparing the *Historia calamitatum* to other confessional or apologetic texts, the singularity of its opening becomes even more conspicuous. Confessional and apologetic traditions indeed seem to avoid consciously talking directly about the writer's 'EGO'.

Abelard, on the contrary, positions his writer's 'EGO' at the very opening of the text as the subject with which it will deal. Taking this as a sign of his intention to give a simple account of his own life would be an unforgivable anachronism, and would imply the negation of thorough rhetorical training. If Abelard awards the writer's 'EGO' such a prominent place, marking it as the explicit subject of his text, he might be linking it less to his own historical existence than implying that he is going to narrate the story of this 'EGO' put forward as the central figure in his account. To put it otherwise, that the 'EGO' he presents to the reader will from the outset be constructed through and by the text. Thus,

30 Von Moos, "Abaelard, Heloise und ihr Paraklet," passim; and Hellemans, "The 'Whole Abelard,'" 349, n. 1.

the question has to be posed: to whom or to what does he want this opening 'EGO' to refer?

The answer might be found less in a factual and historical reference than in a textual link. Abelard's choice for this remarkable start was inspired by the opening of the story of Malchus in Jerome's *Vita Malchi*, the monk who, taken prisoner by the Saracens, managed to escape with the woman he had been obliged to marry. This part of the story starts with the words: *Ego inquit* . . . Here the narrator's 'EGO' has been advanced in a similarly striking way. Malchus will tell his life story. He will give an account of his evolution leading to the 'EGO,' since Jerome has asked him to do so. What has incited Jerome's curiosity is that Malchus is living together with an old woman. He wants to know "what their bond was: one of marriage, or of parentage, or a spiritual one?" This brought him to question the man, whereupon he came to know his story.³¹

Abelard's acquaintance with Jerome leaves no doubts about his willingly following the opening of Malchus' story with the remarkable 'EGO' at the start of his own account. In the truly apologetic conclusion at the end, he returns explicitly to Malchus' example to defend his continued contacts with Heloise's community.³² His very first word thus already picks up this stance of the conclusion, linking both together and creating a closed composition.

More important than the compositional and structural significance of the opening word, however instructive it may be, are the implications for the reader who has recognized (or who will recognize quite soon after continuing his reading) the textual link. Abelard's opening 'EGO' directs him to the opening of Malchus' story, thus doubling his reference frame: Abelard's narrator's voice takes up the stance of Malchus who starts to tell his story in order to explain his relations with the old woman. Abelard's opening 'EGO' implies Heloise's presence right from the start. Indeed, Abelard's 'EGO' proves to be a complex construction, covering much more than the simple and unique autobiographical 'I'.

Literary Voices

Let us take a short step sideways. Abelard's manipulation of his narrator's 'EGO' might seem to some either an antagonism unacceptable in a twelfth-century writer, or a denial of the much-vaunted 'discovery of the individual'

31 Jerome, *Vita Malchi monachi captivi*, ed. Edgardo M. Morales (Paris: Les éditions du cerf, 2006), 2.

32 HC, 104, available in Monfrin (1967), 1445.

as has been stressed since the early 1970s.³³ As an answer to both objections it will be helpful to take a closer look at the climate in which Abelard enjoyed his education. As we know, in the *Historia calamitatum* Abelard only makes mention of his inclination towards dialectics. This has brought many a scholar to suppose that he did not enjoy a thorough classical education. As his earlier writings are uniquely focussed on logical subjects, they furthermore seem to confirm the image of a purely logical mind, which only became interested in the classical authors when he started to teach Heloise. Supposedly, it would have been her influence that made him turn to them.³⁴

Statements like this ignore as much of the contemporary educational reality as those that depart from the credibility of autobiographies as private letters. Abelard's writing skills, his literary gifts, do not allow us to assume any sort of neglect in his education. He even refers to this himself, be it in a rather oblique way: his father, having had the opportunity to get a taste of the *litterae* in his youth, became so fond of them later in his life (*tanto litteras amore complexus est*) that he wanted his sons to be educated in 'letters' before they were trained in arms. In sum, let us not suppose that Abelard's father was an adept of dialectics! The paternal love of *litterae* can only refer to poetry and to classical literature, to be situated in the contemporaneous current of openness towards literary culture among the nobles of the Southwest. William IX of Aquitaine offers the most famous example, but apparently he had to compete with others, such as Ebles of Ventadorn, viscount of Ventadour and surnamed Cantador.³⁵

At the same time, the Anglo-Norman and Aquitaine courts became flourishing centres of poetical activity in Latin and probably also in the vernacular. An important stimulus came from a group of Latin poets, known as the School of the Loire, because most of them lived or stayed around that river.³⁶ Even though its characterization as a 'school' is contested, the fact remains

33 Colin Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual: 1050–1200* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973).

34 Clanchy, *Abelard*, 169; and Marenbon, "Life, Milieu," 24–25.

35 Gerald Bond, *The Poetry of William VII, Count of Poitiers, IX Duke of Aquitaine* (London: Garland Publishing Co., 1982), xlvii–xlix.

36 Heinz Brinkmann, *Entstehungsgeschichte des Minnesangs* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1920), 18–28; Wolfgang von den Steinen, *Der Kosmos des Mittelalters* (Bern and München: Francke, 1959), 231; Peter von Moos, *Hildebert von Lavardin 1056–1133* (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1965), 16; Maurice Hélin, *Littérature d'occident: Histoire des lettres latines du moyen âge* (Bruxelles: Office de publicité, 1943), 54; Jean-Yves Tilliette, *Baldricus Burgulianus Carmina* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1998), xxxiv; Wim Verbaal, "Vix Romae Roma recordor: L'image de Rome dans l'école de la Loire," *Camenae* 2 (2007), <http://www.paris-sorbonne.fr/fr/IMG/pdf/Wim.pdf>.

that these poets shared many poetical features and were acquainted with each other's works. Marbod and Hildebert were the leading figures, the former being a *scholasticus* at the cathedral school of Angers, the latter his friend and *scholasticus* at the school of Tours. Both became bishops, Hildebert in 1096 of Le Mans and archbishop of Tours in 1125, Marbod of Rennes also in 1096.³⁷ A third poet often associated with them is the abbot Baudri of Bourgueil, bishop of Dol in 1106.³⁸ Many other poems, often anonymous, can be linked to their influence through formal and intrinsic similarities. All three shared a passion for Ovid, notably his love poems, and in their poetry they follow or compete with him.³⁹ As far as our subject is concerned, one poetical element should be singled out, what I have called "disjunction of voices."⁴⁰ Indeed, for the first time since Antiquity, the poem's voice no longer shows any direct connection to the poet. Both 'voices' have become disjunctive and are no longer entwined in a linear way. Ovid's own playing with voices and perspectives was well perceived and adopted by these poets, who therefore did not feel impeded from writing lascivious love-poems, honourable churchmen as they were.

We find a notable example in Marbod's poem 23, included in the *editio princeps* of 1524 but eliminated from the later editions.⁴¹ Here the poet takes up the stance of the sixth-century poet Maximianus, boasting of his youthful successes as a lover and lamenting his actual old age. In the edition the poem bears a moral title: *Dissuasio intempestivi amoris sub assumpta persona*, making clear that the poet is not talking in his own voice. Other love poems in his oeuvre do this less explicitly and thus have given rise to every kind of suspicion and attempt to reconstruct his love affairs. Actually these poems were written partly in and for the school, partly in a playful competition with fellow poets. This kind of disjunction of voices was not entirely new, of course. The voice of the *persona* in the text was never treated as identical with the historical writer, but in previous, mainly monastic literature the dividing line was less abrupt, smoother, and was certainly a much less conscious construction. The Loire

37 Von Moos, *Hildebert von Lavardin*, 5–15; R. Leotta, *Marbodo di Rennes: De ornamentis verborum; Liber decem capitulorum* (Firenze: SISMEL, 1998).

38 Tilliette, *Baldricus Burgulianus*, v–x.

39 Gerald Bond, "Tocus amoris: The Poetry of Baudry of Bourgueil and the Formation of the Ovidian Subculture," *Traditio* 42 (1986), 143–193.

40 Wim Verbaal, "How the West Was Won by Fiction: The Appearance of Fictional Narrative and Leisurely Reading in Western Literature (11th and 12th century)," in *Fiction in Global Context*, ed. Anders Cullhed and Lena Rydholm (Berlin: De Gruyter, forthcoming).

41 Walther Bulst, "Liebesbriefgedichte Marbods," in *Liber Floridus: Studien Paul Lehmann gewidmet*, ed. Bernhard Bischoff (St Ottilien: Eos Verlag der Erzabtei, 1950), 287–301, esp. 287–289.

poets 'discovered' the independence of textual reality and enjoyed exploiting it. They took delight in putting themselves into someone else's shoes. Marbod constructs complete poetical letter exchanges, in which he reacts to the ('lost') letters of his beloved.⁴² Baudri and other poets take over the *Heroides* and start writing in the name of mythical male and female lovers. True drama is not far off.

One of the greatest explorers of the opportunities offered by this substantial difference of the textual voice is Anselm of Canterbury, who in both his letters and meditations takes on the 'EGO' as a textual construction. He does not use it as a game, however. In fact, he is continuing the traditional monastic stand with its strongly pedagogic inclination, endowing it with an unseen force thanks to his manipulating the possibilities of the textual 'EGO'. For Anselm, the 'EGO' is not merely the teaching writer, it is also the disciple reader. His 'EGO' applies not so much to the writer as writer, but rather as a reader. In the very same way, it simultaneously refers to the writer in the reader. The reader is needed to finish the text: he becomes the co-writer of the text. And to achieve this in his reader, the writer must be first of all a co-reader, before becoming a writer. The 'EGO' thus becomes a very complicated textual composition, referring primarily to the obligation of a highly active participation.⁴³

This was the atmosphere in which Abelard received his basic training. If his father was so fond of *litterae* as to send all his sons out to study, we might suppose that he chose the best known schools and schoolmasters in the area. In this case, the city of Angers, where Marbod enjoyed a good name during the 1070s and 1080s, seems a likely location to have educated the child Peter Abelard. But this remains pure speculation. We know that Abelard was acquainted with the teaching of Ulger, however, Marbod's successor at Angers, whom he attacks both in his *Dialectica* and in the *Theologia christiana*. He also indignantly mocks the ecclesiastical permissiveness shown towards the poetic liberties taken by church dignitaries, which he opposes to the unwillingness of those same authorities to admit the serious and honest teaching of the philosophers.⁴⁴ Abelard was certainly not a stranger to the poetic currents centred at the Loire river where he himself got his education. Equally, Anselm cannot have been unknown to him, both because of the high esteem he enjoyed and because of his attacks against Abelard's own master Roscelinus

42 Peter Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 84–85.

43 M. Burcht Pranger, *The Artificiality of Christianity: Essays on the Poetics of Monasticism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 121.

44 *TC*, 2.126–2.129.

of Compiègne.⁴⁵ Even if Abelard's statement in the *Historia calamitatum*, that he was exclusively interested in dialectics, were true, by his gifts as a writer, Abelard would surely have been open to these literary influences of his youth.

The Failed Saint

Thus Abelard's disjunction of voices in his opening 'EGO' should not be a surprise, since it fits into an already strong literary current. Yet he knew how to give it his own particular twist. As we have seen, the 'EGO' in Abelard takes up both the voice of Malchus and that of the epistolary writer who opens the text. He also links his own voice to the still absent voice of Heloise. But the situation is more complex still. Malchus' voice in Jerome's text is the voice of a narrator different from the actual writer's voice. Malchus is a figure in Jerome's narration. By adopting Malchus' voice as the opening of his own account, Abelard thus seems to suggest to the reader that he make a similar difference between the voice that narrates his life-story and the epistolary voice framing this story. Once again, Abelard gives a signal that the 'EGO' of his account is an 'EGO' that wants to be constructed and not simply identified with the epistolary sender and even less with the historical writer.⁴⁶

Continuing his reading of the *Historia calamitatum*, the reader encounters the little word *igitur*, seemingly neutral. While it seems a normal connection to the introductory epistolary phrases, it becomes a loaded element when also taking the words following it in account, *oppido quodam oriundus*. This chain of words is recognizable for all of Abelard's readers. The connection directs them to the actual opening sentence of the 'Life of St Martin': *Igitur Martinus Sabaria Pannoniarum oppido oriundus fuit* . . . Just like the account of Malchus and of Abelard himself, Martin's true life story starts after an introduction. The repetition of textual context and of the same and similar words strengthens the hagiographical tenor of Abelard's opening, and this will be confirmed even

45 Clanchy, *Abelard*, 290–294.

46 For a similar use of the 'EGO' in a non-personalized sense by Bernard of Clairvaux, see M. Burcht Pranger, *Bernard of Clairvaux and the Shape of Monastic Thought: Broken Dreams* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 167–180; and Wim Verbaal, "Preaching the Dead from Their Graves: Bernard of Clairvaux's Lament on His Brother Gerard," in *Speculum Sermonis: Interdisciplinary Reflections on the Medieval Sermon*, ed. Georgiana Donavin, Cary Nederman, and Richard Utz (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 113–139, esp. 133–152; as opposed to Brian Patrick McGuire, *The Difficult Saint: Bernard of Clairvaux and His Tradition* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Studies, 1991), 133–152.

more by the continuation of this same sentence, repeating and mixing both the opening sentences of Jerome's 'Life of Hilarion' and of Jerome's own short autobiographical text in *De viris illustribus*.⁴⁷ Simultaneously, the first sentence of the epistolary introduction acquires its true significance. Abelard opposes examples to words, taking up the traditional *topos* of hagiography as it was most clearly installed in Gregory's dialogues.⁴⁸

Thus, an intricate web of hagiographical allusions and quotations gives its colour to these opening sentences. Abelard apparently wants his *Historia calamitatum* to be read in the sense of hagiography and to install an identification of his textual 'EGO' with the saints Malchus, Martin, Hilarion, Jerome—i.e. the monk living chastely with his wife, the wandering monk, as well as the intellectual monk and ascetic. At the same time Abelard creates an identification of the epistolary 'EGO' with the most important hagiographical narrators: Gregory, Jerome and Sulpicius Severus. The identification with St Martin demands further explanation. The importance of the link to St Martin's life can be deduced from the fact that the saint is the only one of all the hagiographical references in Abelard's opening that is *not* connected to the work of Jerome. But also the construction of the opening sentence itself ought to sharpen the reader's eye. Compared to his model, Abelard has introduced a chiasm (*Ego igitur* versus *Igitur Martinus*), thus giving an even stronger focus to the opening 'EGO'. This heightened significance ought to guide the reader towards the link with the *Vita Malchi*, but should also trigger his attention to the spectacular substitution of Martin's name by the textual 'EGO'. Even when recognizing the other references, the reader will first of all try to discover the connection between the 'EGO' and St Martin.⁴⁹

47 HC, 63, ed. Monfrin (1967), 8–10: 'Ego igitur, oppido quodam oriundus quod in ingressu minoris Britannie constructum, ab urbe Namnetica versus orientem octo credo miliariis remotum [...]': *Vita Sancti Hilarionis* 2 (n. 31, 214): 'Hilarion ortus vico Tabatha, qui circiter quinque milia a Gaza, urbe palaestinae, ad austrum situs est [...]': Jerome, *De viris illustribus* 135, ed. Aldo Ceresa-Gastaldo (Firenze: Nardini editore, 1988), 230: 'Hieronymus, natus patre Eusebio, oppido Stridonis, quod a Gothis eversum Dalmatiae quodam Pannoniaeque confinium fuit [...].'

48 HC, 63 ed. Monfrin (1967), 1: 'Sepe humanos affectus aut provocant aut mittigant amplius exempla quam verba.' Gregorius, *Dialogi I Prologus*, ed. Adalbert de Vogüé, reproduced in *Opere di Gregorio Magno* (Roma: Città Nuova Editrice, 2000), 74: 'Et sunt nonnulli quos ad amorem patriae caelestis plus exempla quam praedicamenta succendunt.'

49 A similar construction is used in the later conversion story of Herman the Jew, who starts his actual account with the words: 'Igitur ego peccator et indignus sacerdos, Hermannus, Judas quondam dictus, genere Israelita, tribu Levita, ex patre David et matre Sephora, in Coloniensi metropoli oriundus [...]'. See Jean-Claude Schmitt, *La conversion d'Hermann*

Now, Abelard's account continues in a remarkable echo of the story of St Martin. In both stories the narrator focuses on the relation between the principal character and his father, and on the choices made for the son's career. Abelard's story, however, evolves in a mirrored way, sometimes evoking parallel lines, sometimes tending exactly to the opposite side. Both fathers are *milites*, soldiers or knights. Both sons have diverging inclinations from what seems their normal vocation. Martin wants to dedicate himself to the *militia Christi*, abjuring the military career his father expects. Abelard dedicates himself to dialectics, making the choice for the *militia Minervae* and leaving his knightly rights as the oldest son to his brothers. The motives of the fathers differ, however. Martin's father opposes his son's wish to live an entirely Christian life. He even delivers him to the imperial officers. The son is forced to follow the footsteps of his father. Abelard's father on the contrary enjoins his son to study. In both situations, the son takes a distance from his father and from the obligations he is saddled with. Moreover, in both situations the son prefers the spiritual form of arms: those of Christ, those of Minerva.

Abelard's contrastive rewriting of the opening of Martin's Life should not be taken too lightly. It prepares the entire first part of his account. It has been noticed often that Abelard may have abandoned his military duty, but that his language remains strongly martial. This has been understood as the continuation of his chivalrous background. Indeed, although he refuses the knightly career expected of him as the oldest son, he grafts those ideals onto his activity as a dialectician. The reason behind this can be inferred from the underlying model of St Martin. While Martin lived a truly Christian life during his time in the army, Abelard presents his 'EGO' as the continuation of the life of a knight into that of a dialectician, the life of a cleric. Martin lived a saint's life while leading that of a soldier. Abelard's 'EGO' has made a choice, but does not draw the necessary conclusions. Abelard thus presents his 'EGO' as a counter-Martin, a *persona* stuck in a halfway conversion.

"Finally, I reached Paris" / *Pervenit tandem Parisius*. After having set out his character along the contrastive lines of a first model, Abelard returns to the other basic contrast figure, which he took to model his 'EGO' on. The second episode in these opening paragraphs—Paris and the encounter with William of Champeaux—opens once again with words taken from the *Vita Malchi*. After Malchus has described in a few sentences how he escaped his parents in order to look for a monastery, he tells how he finally reaches a monastery

le Juif: Autobiographie, histoire et fiction (Paris: Gallimard, 2003); and the translation of this work in Jean-Claude Schmitt, *The Conversion of Hermann the Jew*, trans. (Pennsylvania: Penn's University Press, 2003), for similar problems around autobiography, historical fact, and fiction.

where he can stay: *Pervenit tandem ad eremum Chalcidos* / "Finally, I reached the Chalcidian desert."

Once again a subtle verbal echo is intended to trigger the reader's attention. And once again it is confirmed by what follows. Both Malchus and Abelard's 'EGO' reach a place of well established and acknowledged *magisterium*, to which they submit. Each passes a time of probation: several years for Malchus, a very short period for Abelard, but both told in less than a sentence. Next, each comes into conflict with his master: Abelard's 'EGO' with William, Malchus with his abbot, and both realize that this is the reason behind all the misery that befalls them thereafter. Malchus, however, offers a model to which Abelard's account conforms rather closely. Yet exactly because of this initial closeness in their lives, the ultimate divergence between Abelard's 'EGO' and Jerome's Malchus will be all the more clear. Malchus is the monk living chastely with a woman. Abelard's 'EGO' is unable to achieve this state until he is corporally mutilated.

The opening paragraphs of Abelard's story draw the lines along which his textual 'EGO' will be developed. From a counter-Martin he must become his true follower, that is, from a knight who merely adopts an outer form of spiritual life, Abelard needs to develop into a true knight of Christ, putting his gifts as a dialectician to the benefit of faith. Similarly, from a deviant Malchus, he must become a 'true Malchus', so that he will be able to live the chaste and spiritual life of a true monk with Heloise. In both senses, the opening paragraphs of his story present Abelard's textual 'EGO' as a failed saint, thus typifying the account from the outset as a story of conversion and growing consciousness as to the proper vocation.

Consistent Failure

Only after having marked off these points of departure, and the background against which his story has to be read, can the true account take its departure. The *Historia calamitatum* continues along the double lines of the knightly dialectician and the unchaste lover, until both are forcedly converted by his castration and by the burning of his book. Abelard first focuses on the evolution of the knightly dialectician, or rather the dialectical knight. The military language often being noticed, the chivalrous character of the text is not limited to a mere choice of words. The entire imagery derives from contemporaneous knightly literature, notably the many texts treating the story of Troy.⁵⁰ Abelard's 'EGO'

50 Wim Verbaal, "Homer im lateinischen Mittelalter," in *Homer-Handbuch: Leben—Werk—Wirkung*, ed. A. Rengakos (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler Verlag, 2011), 329–336.

sets out to besiege Paris that is defended by William of Champeaux, its greatest hero. Paris becomes Troy and the confrontation between Abelard's 'EGO' and William is presented as the one between Greeks and Trojans, in which the victory did not automatically fall to the side that was superior. When Abelard at the end of this battle puts the words of Ajax into his 'EGO's' mouth, this ought not only to be taken as an expression of utter complacency. It contains the recognition of William as the only knightly opponent capable of defending the besieged town against the attacks of the 'EGO', as its very own Hector. At the same time, it already implies the sin of the Greeks, and notably Ajax' haughtiness that will bring ruin to himself. For this reason, if Ajax may boast that he has not been defeated, yet he cannot rightly claim to be the victor.

The battle for Paris is a battle of schooling. Its different stages are demarcated by the 'EGO's' regular retreats to Bretagne. Their historical motives surely were the periods of disgrace of Abelard's patron, Stephen de Garlande,⁵¹ but Abelard knew how to give them sense in his account. Each of them closes and introduces a successive phase of learning: dialectics, rhetoric, Scripture. Not only do they contain a clear evolution in themselves, they also reflect the roles played by the 'EGO' and its opponents. The phase of dialectics is actually the shortest. It shows the 'EGO' as a rebellious student reacting against William as his schoolmaster. The confrontation remains limited to both figures, in which the student has to abandon the field because he has overestimated his own forces.

In the next phase, that of rhetoric, the true war breaks out in Paris. Even when the actual confrontation may have focused on dialectical topics, Abelard shows it is launched for rhetorical motives. William is no longer the schoolmaster of the cathedral school, but the founder of a 'monastic' community (a community of regular canons) and, for this reason, is considered by Abelard a much more valiant opponent. The battle is longer and fought more vehemently. The positions move forward and back, and neither seems to permit any concession to the other. The actual victim is the school of Paris, which has to succumb to the rivalry between the two forces. Abelard's 'EGO' may be proud that he did not succumb to it himself, but like Ajax, he cannot boast a victory either.

Abelard now has to leave the field on account of his mother, who expresses the desire to enter the monastery. This might be understood as a hint at the final destination of Abelard's character, but the 'EGO' himself does not yet seem to understand. He returns for the next phase of the battle, but as William has left Paris to become bishop of Châlons, Abelard's 'EGO' heads for Laon

51 Bautier, "Paris au temps," *passim*.

in order to study Scripture under Anselm. The language and imagery change completely. They are no longer military, and Abelard ceases to present his character as a knight. Anselm of Laon is not a valiant opponent, but an old-fashioned and discarded authority, comparable to the old oak with which Pompey is compared in Lucan's *Pharsalia*. Anselm does not even appear in person in the *Historia calamitatum*. He remains in the background, a victim of the slander his assistants spread about Abelard's textual 'EGO' and forcing the 'EGO' to retreat.

If Anselm is indirectly compared to Pompey, the reader is invited to identify his opponent with Cæsar. Instead of a siege, the *Historia calamitatum* now offers the image of a civil war, but without Lucan's vehemence, as the victory is clear from the start. Anselm is no equal to the young 'EGO', just as Pompey was no adversary for Cæsar. Yet unlike Cæsar, Abelard's 'EGO' tends towards passivity rather than action, once again indicating the future failure of the principal character. After Laon, Abelard's 'EGO' finally obtains the Chair at the Paris cathedral school "that had long since been promised and offered" to him.⁵² His evolution as a knight of dialectics comes to an end, confirming his intellectual pride, and the second evolution can commence, that of the *miles amoris*.

Being Defeated by Oneself

The passage describing the love between Abelard's 'EGO' and Heloise nonetheless starts off somehow as a continuation of the previous imagery. The 'EGO' is introduced into Fulbert's house as the 'Trojan Horse', as a wolf among the lambs. He abuses Fulbert's confidence in his chaste fame. But there the military language stops. It cedes to the language of love, combining different inspirations, both the love scenes from the epics and the language of the school. Contrarily to the previous pages, almost no quotations or allusions to literary sources appear. Only when everything begins to fall to pieces is a proverbial phrase of Jerome's quoted.

The more remarkable is the abundance of mainly patristic quotations in Heloise's invective against marriage. It has been remarked that these quotations appear in almost the same order in the second Theology, the *Theologia christiana*,⁵³ making it unlikely that Abelard is truly quoting Heloise. Rather, he is putting his own words into her mouth, or rather into the mouth of the 'Heloise' he is constructing in this same text—an Heloise that cannot be taken

52 Monfrin 70, 241–242.

53 *TC*, 2.96–10 (n. 43).

at face value any more than Abelard's 'EGO'. She too has to be constructed in the text. She does not yet conform to the model that is evoked for her in the very first words of the *Historia calamitatum*: she has to be like the chaste wife of Malchus, and the *Historia calamitatum* shows how circumstances have made this final aim inevitable both for her and for the 'EGO'.

At this point, 'Heloise' is still the 'EGO's' victim, but also his Muse. She maps for him the road to a scholastic career, inspiring him with the words of the Fathers. This passage forms in many ways a turning point in the *Historia calamitatum*. From now on Scripture and the Fathers are quoted repeatedly, whereas they were almost wholly absent before. Classical allusions become even scarcer than they were before. The *volta* in the story of Abelard's 'EGO' is near. He will have to leave his secular ambitions completely and realize where his vocation lies. Nonetheless, within the story's development he has not yet realized it. The narrator must be forced by external power. He dwells in his secular pride, not seeing his own degeneration as it is subtly indicated in the narration itself.

Already at the start of his love affair, Abelard the narrator points out how his 'EGO' is losing the battle. School has become boring to him. His teaching loses its attractiveness. Experience (*usus*) carries him on, no longer his talents (*ingenium*). This, however, was exactly what he reproached Anselm of Laon of doing, opposing his own exegesis to that of the old master. Soon after having procured the chair, he has now become similar to the master; the beginning of his decline is reflected in this assimilation to his opponents.

The resemblance reaches its culmination with 'Heloise's' taking up the veil. According to the *Historia calamitatum* she utters in despair the words Cornelia spoke to Pompey. Of course, there was no room for a similar theatrical quotation on this occasion.⁵⁴ Abelard does not want to give a factual account here. He wants the reader to realize that his 'EGO' in the meantime has come to resemble even more closely his former adversary: Anselm of Laon, whom he had compared with Lucan's oak. Abelard's 'EGO' has reached the nadir of his decline, having become as impotent a shade as Anselm had appeared to him. Nothing remains of the knight, nothing of the lover. The time has come for Abelard's 'EGO' to convert and to follow his true vocation.

One obstacle remains, however, and that is the intellectual pride. It will receive its punishment at Soissons. But in the preamble to this event, Abelard's 'EGO' has to pass an even more painful assimilation. Once entered into St Denis, the character is asked to take up his teaching again, but, in complying with the demand, he encounters the renewed envy of his adversaries.

54 As evidently stated in von Moos, "Abaelard, Heloise und ihr Paraklet," 275–277.

They reproach him that his monastic state does not allow him to dedicate himself to worldly teaching, thus repeating the same reproach Abelard's 'EGO' had pronounced against William of Champeaux after his founding of the community of St Victor.

Abelard's account has become a story of failed resemblances. His 'EGO' fails to fully assimilate the hagiographic models that form the background of his life story, while he conforms entirely to those models he originally wanted to oppose. But even when the council at Soissons condemns his book, seeking to break his intellectual pride, Abelard fails truly to become the equal of his adversaries. He must realize that even at that level he has failed, not gaining the recognition his former opponents enjoyed.

Founding Father

The episode of Soissons, situated at the exact centre of the *Historia calamitatum*, also constitutes the true *volta* of his story. It has been shown elsewhere that the entire process of Soissons must be read against the background of Christ's persecution and condemnation, as well as that of other biblical tribulations like that of Susanna. These allusions indeed "confer on Abelard's condemnation the glory of an intellectual martyrdom."⁵⁵

This type of martyrdom, however, does not seem the actual aim of Abelard's account. Even when taking Christ himself as a model for this episode, Abelard the narrator does not push the comparison so far as to truly equate his 'EGO' with the Saviour of mankind himself quoting John 7:26, though he stops short of the explicit reference to Christ with which that verse concludes.⁵⁶ Indeed, an explicit assimilation to Christ would be out of place in an account, which till now took the failure of the chief character to assimilate to the models the text requires as its guideline. If anything, in the episode at Soissons, Abelard's 'EGO' proves to be a failed Christ.

But even when considered as a new failure, the episode presents us no less with a failure of *Christ*. In its presentation of an intellectual fiasco, the turning point towards a 'new life' of the 'EGO' is also implied. The second half of Abelard's account takes another turn. None of the previous lines will be discarded, but they will slowly take on their true sense within the story.

The starting point of the new course that the account will take lies in the dispute, about the authenticity of St Denis, between Abelard's 'EGO' and

55 Wetherbee, "Literary Works," 51–52, notably John 7 and Daniel 12.

56 Wetherbee, "Literary Works," 52.

his fellow monks. It leads to his flight and retreat into 'the desert' where he will found his first community. Indeed, the new direction of the story shows Abelard's 'EGO' as a founder and reformer of monastic-like communities. In more than one way this will prove to be his true vocation according to the text, finally providing the account with a consistent sense as a whole, and making clear what seems to be its central function. Abelard's 'EGO' gets involved in the creation or reformation of three communities: a new community of students at the Paraclete, the monastic community of St Gildas, and finally a second Paraclete community, created by Heloise and her sisters. As is the case in the earlier part of his account, all three episodes have to be read against the background of existing models. This time, however, the narrator is rather more straightforward about them. He refers explicitly to the ancient philosophers described by St Jerome, to St Benedict, and to St Jerome himself.

The first community is evoked in the passionate words of St Jerome's description of the philosophical communities of the pagan past. The students resemble hermits more than scholars, thus truly imitating the ancient philosophers. The image is telling and surely more suggestive than factual. As the experiment of the 'first Paraclete' eventually failed, probably due to complaints from the neighbourhood on the not so hermit-like behaviour of these students, it must be clear that Abelard has other aims in using this evocative language to describe his first community.

The failure of his enterprise is indeed described differently from his former failures. This time it is caused by external pressure, while Abelard's 'EGO' clearly acts consistently with the textual models imposed on him. In the first half of his account the external attacks were in accordance with his inner failure to conform to the role model he was expected to be. Now, however, his inner stance conforms to the models imposed on him by the writer. The 'EGO' is identified with Plato's retiring to the solitude of the Academy in order to make his students concentrate solely on what matters. The 'EGO' has finally understood what his intellectual commitment ought to be. He has become a monastic philosopher, a new Plato, turning his intellectual ambitions from knighthood to desert life, from pride to humility. The external attacks that force him to flee can be depicted as dangerous to true conversion in their aggressiveness.

In his second 'community experiment' at the monastery of St Gildas Abelard compares his alter 'EGO' explicitly with St Benedict under attack from the monks whose community the father of monasticism tried to reform. Once again, Abelard's character has to admit failure, and like the former experiment this failure is not due to the protagonist, but to the monks who prove themselves untameable and undisciplined. The inner attitude of the reforming

'EGO' is consistent, but the resistance he meets causes his retreat and flight. The monks prove to be more tenacious disciples than his former students. His own failure is forgivable, considering St Benedict himself had to retreat to avoid running unnecessary risks.

It is the last community around Heloise that gives Abelard's 'EGO' his true satisfaction. Here, he can both deploy his intellectual gifts for an attentive audience waiting to be instructed, and live his chaste life as the spiritual father of a female community. He can be both a master of Christ and a master of life, both a new Martin and a new Malchus. To Heloise and her sisters he can represent what St Jerome had been for his female disciples. Indeed, the model of St Jerome is the end of the line in a long succession of other models, in which all of them are accorded their true significance. But once more, the 'Ego' feels the sting of attack. Slander is spoiling his reputation and he feels obliged to defend his patronage of the female community. The vehemence with which the author confronts the calumnies, and the number of patristic and Scriptural authorities to whom he makes an appeal in order to defend his choice, are remarkable. Inside the *Historia calamitatum*, only 'Heloise's' refutation of marriage and the description of the first student community at the Paraclete show a similar density of authoritative references.

Not accidentally, these are also two episodes with a flavour strongly inspired by Jerome. They are meant to make Abelard's 'EGO'—and most importantly: the reader of this text—realize at whom to look for a model in his own life. 'Heloise's' invective, based upon Jerome's *Contra Iovinianum*, aims at opening the 'EGO's' eyes to his vocation as a Christian intellectual, who should be free from corporeal and worldly occupations in the manner of Jerome, who fled the world to embrace solitude and become the saintly intellectual he is remembered as. In the other episode, Abelard's 'EGO' has taken the 'correct way,' while remaining stuck in false ambitions. His true vocation is not to be sought in the education of his students. This still remains too close to the world of the schools, which he should leave behind. His failure, due to external causes, shows him the way to his actual model and strengthens him to take up the final challenge as his true goal.

Parallel to the evolution which Abelard's 'EGO' undergoes, his models as well as the community members show a similar development. Neither lay male youth nor monks prove worthy of his attention and zeal. Only the female community seems to do so. Heloise and her sisters thus incorporate the highest community fit for spiritual improvement that answers best to the expectations of the reformer that Abelard wants his 'EGO' to be considered as. At the same time, this 'EGO' itself has to transcend its former models. Neither the pagan philosopher nor the monastic founder is able to realize

his aims in contemporary times. Jerome proves to be the true model for the spiritual reform needed, incorporating both the intellectual Christian and the spiritual father to female followers.

The *Historia calamitatum* thus has become the story of a quest. The 'EGO' has to realize its vocation and to do this it is obliged to find its spiritual model, which is presented to the reader as a textual model. It passes through different stages of failure, showing to be a failed Martin, a failed Malchus and a failed Christ. When finally circumstances have dragged Abelard to his conversion, thus forcing him into the role of a founder or reformer of communities, he still fails to recognize the true subject of his vocation. Only after his failures with students and monks alike, with male communities, is he orientated towards the guidance of a female community and comes to see finally what his vocation must be.

Function of the *Historia calamitatum*

As the story of a quest for one's vocation, the *Historia calamitatum* reveals also its intended function. It was written as the foundational document for Heloise's community at the Paraclete. It describes its founder's evolution and how he became the spiritual father of this community. An important aspect is that it depicts his entire evolution as an *external* conversion, as a conversion induced by outer circumstances. As such it has to be complemented by the correspondence that follows, as Von Moos has pointed out clearly, albeit in a different context. These letters show the *inner* conversion, necessary to install a solid base for a new community. In this inner evolution, Abelard's voice gives the spiritual lead, thus demonstrating the veracity of the message in the account of his life story. Indeed, he did manage to develop into a true spiritual guide and father, capable of giving direction to the passionate inner movements of a female disciple.

The *Historia calamitatum* cannot be disconnected from the exchange of letters that follows. Taking the complexity of the scholarly discussions into account, it is my guess that Abelard and Heloise composed them together and as a unity in order to function as the founding documents for the new community and to demonstrate its viability. It may have been intended to back up Abelard's request, made to Innocent II in 1130/1131, for papal recognition. It surely constitutes a part of an entire programme to provide the community with those textual elements that were considered of primordial importance for its survival and to which the Hymns, the Sermons and the *Problemata* belonged. A founding document was necessary. Abelard provided it, manipulating his

personal life with dazzling skill to fit the requirements of such a document. Unable to change his past, he made the choice to paint his life as a 'failed' hagiographical story, in which external circumstances, that is, the divine will, compel the chief character into his vocation, the spiritual guidance of a female community. The following letters prove his final acceptance and success.

The *Historia calamitatum*, then, was not written to prepare "his re-entry to the schools."⁵⁷ In the end, the schools and the teaching figure as too problematic and too negative in the text itself. Furthermore, at the moment of writing it, Abelard does not seem to anticipate a return to Paris or to the profession of teaching. On the contrary, the *Historia calamitatum* has a very actual significance, intended to secure the right of the female community to exist, as well as his own right to direct it.

For this reason also, it is quite politically biased. In the first place in its depiction of St Denis, as it is due to this monastery that Heloise and her sisters were constrained to leave Argenteuil. It is somehow embarrassing to note that Abelard's picture of St Denis has been generally accepted without any scholarly demurral. For Adam, the abbot of St Denis, was always to be found on the side of Yves of Chartres and his reform-minded followers.⁵⁸ In 1120, when Abelard exercised his textual criticism on the lives of the patron saint, the monastery and its saint were proclaimed as twinned patrons of the French kingdom. Everyone who failed to show the proper respect to both was threatened with a charge of *lèse majesté*.⁵⁹ It seems unlikely, at the least, that the king and one of the strongest reforming ecclesiastics would have bestowed similar favours upon a monastery and its abbot, if they really had been touched by the decadence Abelard suggests.

When Abelard's 'EGO' is finally freed from its obedience to the monastery of St Denis, the *Historia calamitatum* mentions how the new abbot—pointing to Suger, who is not named—agreed to it under the pressure of Stephen, the royal steward. This is the only occurrence of Stephen de Garlande in the entire story, and it surely serves to help discredit Suger, since by that time, Stephen had fallen into utter disgrace. For this same reason, any mention of Stephen is suppressed during the rest of the story, as is the case with Roscelin. Both could

57 Marenbon, "Life, Milieu," 19.

58 Bautier, "Paris au temps," 62–63.

59 Bournazel, *Louis VI*, 160 and 422–423, n. 27. Noticeably, Abelard almost quotes the royal edict in the *HC*. He surely knew the content when writing the *HC* and it is telling that he does not refer to the document in his *Ep.*, 11 to abbot Adam. Apparently, the entire case around St Denis ought to be interpreted according to the promulgation of the edict.

have endangered the purpose of the text, which was to obtain papal approval for Heloise's community.

The *Historia calamitatum* is not an innocent text, nor is its writer. Abelard proves to be a brilliant rhetorician, and his life-story an ingenious piece of manipulative history in which the modern mind all too willingly tends to believe out of some need for its own martyrs. Should we then conclude that the document is simply 'untruthful' because of its manipulative aura? I do not think so. I rather suggest that the text may teach us much more about Abelard's ('inner') truth and reality, as long as we are willing to see it for what it is: a 'perverse' text, demanding a 'perverse' reading, in order to avoid a truly perverse historicization.

Intentions and Conscious Moral Choices in Peter Abelard's *Know Yourself*

Taina M. Holopainen

Introduction

Peter Abelard was a remarkable twelfth-century promoter of ethical thought. Two of his works are dedicated to ethics. The earlier one is the *Dialogue between a Philosopher, a Jew, and a Christian*, also known as the *Collationes*, and composed some time between 1123 and 1135. The work consists of an imaginary dialogue, one in which none of the characters directly represents Abelard's own position but through which it becomes clear that Abelard had a high appreciation of philosophical ethics.¹ The later of Abelard's works on ethics is the treatise *Scito te ipsum* or *Know Yourself*, also called the *Ethica* or *Ethics*.² The book is undoubtedly one of the most important early medieval works in theological or philosophical ethics. In the following article my discussion on Abelard's idea of moral action will be based on this work. Abelard wrote his *Ethics* around the year 1138, only a few years before his death in 1142. The treatise was meant to consist of two books, of which the first was to discuss morally bad acts, or sin, and the second morally good acts. Only the first book has come down to us in full; we have just the very beginning of the second. Therefore the examples available mainly deal with morally bad acts. My topic, however, focuses on the role of intention in morally relevant action and therefore takes into account both morally good and morally bad acts.³

1 *Coll.*, ed. and trans. Orlandi and Marenbon.

2 *Sc.*, ed. Ilgner (2001); and *Sc.*, ed., trans., and notes Luscombe (1971). The references are to Ilgner's edition of the *Sc.*, unless otherwise indicated. Both *Sc.* and *Coll.* are available in P. V. Spade, trans., *Ethical Writings: His "Ethics" or "Know Yourself" and His "Dialogue Between a Philosopher, a Jew and a Christian,"* intro. Marilyn McCord Adams (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1995).

3 Abelard's ethics is thoroughly considered in Marenbon, *The Philosophy*. I agree with Marenbon that Abelard's ethics must be discussed on a number of levels (as he does in his work) in order to "avoid the narrow focus of a whole succession of commentators" (see *ibid.*, 214). However, I think that it can still be meaningful to concentrate on some sector of his ethical thought (as I have done in this article), at least on the assumption that it is possible to attain a deeper understanding of the theme focused on (as I aim to do here). On Abelard's ethics, see also the introduction in Luscombe, *Peter Abelard's 'Ethics,'* xiii–xxxvii; Risto

Although Abelard's ethics can be seen as part of the Augustinian tradition, it also includes elements peculiar to Abelard himself.⁴ The use of the term 'will' (*voluntas*) to imply emotional liking serves as an example of this. The whole story is, however, somewhat more complicated, since Abelard actually uses 'will' both as a non-moral term and as a moral term, without clearly differentiating between them, which sometimes causes the reader trouble. Clearly, it is important to recognize the difference in order to analyse Abelard's texts correctly. The two uses of the term are also related to the morally relevant concepts of 'sin' (*peccatum*), 'consent' (*consensus*), and 'intention' (*intentio*). Moreover, ethical issues are discussed in the work *Scito te ipsum* through these key concepts. I will first consider some important aspects concerning Abelard's way of using them. Thereafter I will focus on consent as a moral act and on the role of intention as a part of consent.

The emphasis on intention, of course, was not Abelard's invention. It plays a role already in Augustine and also appears in the thought of some of Abelard's contemporaries.⁵ Abelard gives intention a clear role in connection with

Saarinen, *Weakness of the Will in Medieval Thought: From Augustine to Buridan* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 51–60; Perkams, *Liebe als Zentralbegriff*; William E. Mann, "Ethics," in *The Cambridge Companion to Abelard*, ed. J. E. Brower and K. Guilfoy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 279–304; John Marenbon, *Medieval Philosophy: An Historical and Philosophical Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 145–148; Jörn Müller, *Willensschwäche in Antike und Mittelalter: Eine Problemgeschichte von Sokrates bis Johannes Duns Scotus* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2009), 413–449.

- 4 See the comments in Luscombe, *Peter Abelard's Ethics*, xxxiii–xxxv. The use of the concepts of will and consent in Abelard's ethics have their background in Augustine, although Abelard "ceases to speak of sin as an act of will" (*ibid.*, xxxiv), and despite Abelard carrying "the principles of intention and of consent beyond Augustine's own limits" (*ibid.*, xxxv). On will and consent in Augustine's philosophy of mind, see Saarinen, *Weakness of the Will*, 20–44; Risto Saarinen, *Weakness of Will in Renaissance and Reformation Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 19–27; and William E. Mann, "Inner-life Ethics," in *The Augustinian Tradition*, ed. G. B. Matthews (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 140–165.
- 5 On acts and intentions in Abelard and in his predecessors and contemporaries, see Marenbon, *The Philosophy*, 251–257. On "Peter Abelard and twelfth-century ethics," see Luscombe *Peter Abelard's Ethics*, xiii–xxxvii. With regard to the concept of intention, the reference to its Augustinian use is roughly limited in my article to different kinds of motivations that can direct moral action. As Bonnie Kent writes: "Augustine and Kant further agree that moral desert or merit depends less on the ability to perform one physical action or another than on the capacity for certain kinds of motivations. [...] We see in Augustine, then, the beginnings of a Western tradition that treats the distinction between will and nature, which lies chiefly in motivations, as indispensable for any adequate account of moral responsibility." See Bonnie Kent, "Augustine's Ethics," in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, ed. E. Stump and N. Kretzmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 222.

exterior acts, but he may—perhaps a bit surprisingly—omit it elsewhere when one would expect that he would not. Here I aim to analyse in what way and in which connections the concept of intention is or can be applied in Abelard's ethics. The objective is to elucidate the following questions: Can we have reliable criteria for the moral evaluation of an action, and, what exactly do we evaluate when we consider a certain action from a moral point of view? These questions also involve questions of relevant knowledge in the evaluation of a moral action.

The Use of Morally Relevant Concepts

According to Abelard, 'sin' in its proper sense (*peccatum proprie*) means that someone consciously consents to something which he believes should not be consented to. Thus 'sin' is defined through the ethically important concept of consent: if there is no consent, there is no sin. The real moral wrong which makes one guilty (*culpa anime*)⁶ is then found in the consents or choices of morally responsible persons. Some sins which are morally bad choices are 'light' or 'venial' and others are 'heavy', 'damnable' or 'criminal'. Heavy sins belong to the domain of the Decalogue.⁷ Abelard also considers 'sin' in a broad sense (*peccatum large*): sinning means doing something which is not fitting for us to do but which we do, for example through error or ignorance. We have not then chosen to do something against our own conscience, that is, against our belief concerning what is right to do.⁸ Abelard's one example is a poor woman who puts her baby by her side to keep him warm with her own rags but after having fallen asleep smothers the baby. Certainly the woman did not consciously choose to do something which she knew to be wrong. In this sense,

6 Sc., 1.3.58–1.3.60: 'Hunc uero consensum proprie peccatum nominamus, hoc est culpam anime, qua dampnationem meretur, uel apud deum rea statuitur.' Ibid., 1.44.1140–1.44.1143: 'Nos tamen proprie peccatum, ut sepe iam meminimus, illud solum dici arbitramur, quod in culpa negligencie consistit nec in aliquibus esse potest, cuiuscumque sint etatis, quin ex hoc dampnari mereantur.' Ibid., 1.42.1096–1.42.1098: 'Proprie tamen peccatum illud dici arbitror, quod nusquam sine culpa contingere potest.' Ibid., 1.36.944–1.36.947: '[...] profecto secundum hoc, quod superius peccatum descripsimus esse – contemptum dei uel consentire in eo, in quo credit consensendum non esse [...].'

7 Ibid., 1.46.1193–1.47.1230. On the difference between venial and damnable (or mortal) sins, see Robert Blomme, *La doctrine du péché dans les écoles théologiques de la première moitié du XII^e siècle* (Louvain: Universitas Catholica Lovaniensis, 1958), 123–128; Marenbon, *The Philosophy* 277; Perkams, *Liebe als Zentralbegriff*, 192–193; Simo Knuuttila, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 181; Müller, *Willensschwäche in Antike*, 423.

8 Sc., 1.44.1144–1.44.1165.

she is not at fault, as always in the case of *peccatum proprie*. In spite of this, the bishop imposes a heavy penalty on her in order to make women be wary of such dangers.⁹

Another important concept, already mentioned, is 'consent.' It is used for morally relevant acts: the choosing of a certain means for the sake of a certain end. In fact, Abelard offers two slightly different formulations of this means-end pattern to explain action, since there can be two types of relationships between ends and means. In the first, we can say that "a person wills the means because she wills the goal" supposing that a person really wills the means in the sense that she would also choose it independently of the end. But there are also cases in which the means is not willed as such but only for the sake of the end; in these cases, according to Abelard, it would be better to speak of enduring and not of willing. The right formulation would then be as follows: "a person endures the means, because she wills the goal." This is what we really mean when we say, for example, that a person wants an operation, because she wants to be healed.¹⁰ Both formulations work in explaining moral action. In both, we are decision-makers who choose the means for the sake of the end. The choosing, or the consent (which is the term Abelard prefers), is in every case in our power: we can consent or not consent.¹¹

The term 'consent' in the sense of choice is used by Abelard in the way he speaks either of consenting to one's desire (*desiderium*) or of consenting to some action.¹² The connection between them is this: if I consent to my desire, I probably consent to some action according to that desire. Instead of speaking of consenting to some desire, one could also speak of consenting to some will (*voluntas*) or longing (*concupiscentia*). The term 'will' is used here as a non-

9 Ibid., 1.25.658–1.26.668.

10 Ibid., 1.6.136–1.6.147. See also Knuuttila, *Emotions*, 207–208: "Abelard stated that when a necessary means of achieving an end is of such a nature that it would not be separately willed, it is more natural to say that it is tolerated than that it is willed. Reluctant acts of this kind are voluntary, however, because they are a concomitant of the deliberate attempt to achieve something, and they are not externally necessitated (*Ethics* 10.2–6, 16.24–32). [...] In the Augustinian tradition the term 'consent' could be associated with all those acts of the soul which in principle are controllable by the rational will. In this sense Abelard's solution was traditional. However, his attempt to purify the terminology did not find followers. The majority view was that whatever is controllable can be regarded as willed, independently of whether it is found to be pleasing or not. The problem of calling reluctant acts willed was then solved simply by saying that things may be willed as such or they may be willed because of something else (*propter aliud*) only, and not as such."

11 Sc., 1.15.385–1.15.389; *ibid.*, 1.16.423–1.16.424.

12 Ibid., 1.9.213–1.9.232.

moral term, which is synonymous with the terms 'desire' and 'longing'. As has been said, Abelard also uses the same term 'will' as a moral term. Next, I will consider these uses more carefully.

Will as a mere desire can be understood in Abelard's thought from the psychological point of view as follows. Human beings naturally will or desire to do different kinds of things. We have in our minds a countless number of desires which have arisen somehow spontaneously or naturally. Desires as sole movements of the mind are morally indifferent, that is, they are neither morally good nor morally bad. How could they be, if even their coming into being is not in our power. For example, if we desire apples from our neighbour's garden, we are not doing anything wrong. Only consenting to this desire or will would be wrong and a sin, not this will as such. Perhaps it is worth noting here that Abelard also regards exterior deeds as indifferent in themselves,¹³ which nicely aligns with the view that desires to do exterior deeds are indifferent. As for non-moral willing, Abelard thinks that men can never be free from desiring or willing things they are sure they derive pleasure from. This kind of "necessity of desiring" shows the weakness or infirmity of men, characteristic of fallen humanity and common to all.¹⁴

Abelard uses the term 'will' in the moral sense when he speaks of the consent of the will or, as well, when he emphasizes will and consent being within our power.¹⁵ Abelard thinks that we always make a "free decision" (*arbitrium*)¹⁶ to either consent or not consent. Since he speaks of the consent of the will, he must mean that we always freely decide whether we want to consent or not. It is not clear on the basis of these usages that will refers to a faculty which freely

13 Ibid., 1.30.779–1.30.781.

14 Ibid., 1.8.205–1.8.209; *ibid.*, 1.13.324–1.13.327; and *ibid.*, 1.9.213–1.9.223. See also Müller, *Willensschwäche in Antike*, 433: "Zum einen sieht Abaelard diese körperliche Schwäche zweifelsfrei als etwas 'Notwendiges,' der menschlichen Verfügungsgewalt eben nicht beliebig Zugängliches. Zum anderen aber ist der innere Kampf für den Menschen geradezu die notwendige Voraussetzung für die Bewährung seiner ethischen Qualitäten: Sie bieten das Material, an dem sich der Mensch sittlich zu bewähren hat."

15 *Sc.*, 1.8.209–1.8.211: 'Non itaque concupiscere mulierem, set concupiscencie consentire peccatum est, nec uoluntas concubitus, set uoluntatis consensus dampnabilis est.' *Ibid.*, 1.16.423–1.16.424: '[...] uoluntatem uero semper et consensum in nostro habemus arbitrio.'

16 Abelard uses the term *arbitrium* also in this sense, when he speaks of using one's "free decision" badly; see *ibid.*, 1.66.1713–1.66.1718. It is worth noting that human freedom was discussed until around 1270 under the concept of "free decision" (*liberum arbitrium*). Human freedom, for its part, was taken to be required for moral responsibility. See Bonnie Kent, *Virtues of the Will: The Transformation of Ethics in the Late Thirteenth Century* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 98–110.

makes decisions. But surely the consent of the will implies this element of free decision. It is up to us whether we consent or not.

As has been noted, the connection between the concepts of sin and consent can be shown without considering the concept of intention. Certainly this does not exclude 'intention' from the centre of Abelard's ethics. To the contrary, Abelard seems to think that consent has its roots in intention, which is included in consent and which explains why it is precisely *that* consent which is there.¹⁷ I understand Abelard to systematically connect the concept of intention to the concept of consent, either explicitly or (more often) implicitly. Intention gives an interior criterion for the real moral goodness (or badness) of the consent to do something and is therefore decisive in the moral evaluation of exterior acts, too. Namely, to ask about the quality of an intention is to ask in what mind was some exterior act consented to.¹⁸ Abelard uses an example of two men who hang a convict. One man does so because justice requires it; the other because of hatred based on old enmity. Both men do what is good to do and what justice requires; yet, through their different intentions, the former does well and the latter does badly.¹⁹

Knowing one's intention is needed in order to evaluate the real moral status of some exterior act which at first glance seems to have been either fitting to do (by being in accordance with the law) or unfitting to do (by being against the law).²⁰ "Fitting and not fitting to do" is Abelard's own terminology which he seems to apply to acts which are indifferent in themselves but which can be

17 Sc., 1.30.774–1.30.778: 'Solum quippe animum in remuneracione boni uel mali, non effecta operum deus attendit ne, quid de culpa uel de bona uoluntate nostra proueniat, pensat, set ipsum animum in proposito suae intencionis, non in effectu exterioris operis diiudicat.' Ibid., 1.27.710–1.27.714: 'Iuxta hec igitur duo, concupiscenciam carnis et concupiscenciam animae, quae premisimus, *probator cordis et renum* dicitur deus, hoc est "*inspector intencionum uel consensuum inde proueniencium*."'

18 Ibid., 1.18.471–1.18.473: 'Non enim, quae fiunt, set quo animo fiant, pensanda sunt [in Luscombe's edition: "pensat Deus"], nec in opere, set in intencione meritum operantis uel laus consistit.' See also Sc., 1.28.9–1.28.11, ed., trans., and notes Luscombe (1971). Abelard emphasizes that it is only God who can ultimately 'see' the intention, that is, in what mind some deed has been done: 'Deus uero solus, qui non tam, quae fiunt, quam, quo animo fiant, attendit, ueraciter in intencione nostra reatum pensat et uero iudicio culpam examinat. Vnde et *probator cordis et renum* dicitur et *in abscondito uidere*. Ibi enim maxime uidet, ubi nemo uidet, quia in puniendo peccatum non opus attendit set animum, sicut nos econuerso non animum, quem non uidemus, set opus quod nouimus.' See Sc., 1.26.685–1.26.692.

19 Sc., 1.18.474–1.18.479.

20 Ibid., 1.30.779–1.30.784, 1.34.899–34.901, and 1.18.461–18.463.

divided into these two classes of fitting and unfitting. The classes can provide a preliminary understanding of the moral goodness or badness of a particular exterior act. But the moral status of that act cannot be revealed by them, since it is dependent on the moral agent's intention which is a kind of interior criterion for the moral status of his or her action. (As was the case in the example above, where the exterior act of hanging was in itself fitting to do under the available law system.)

Abelard's basic idea of intention regarding exterior acts seems to be as follows. It is not automatically clear that some particular exterior act included in the class of acts against the law (not fitting to do) is bad from a moral point of view. In the same way, it is not automatically clear that some particular exterior act included in the class of acts in accordance with the law (fitting to do) is good from a moral point of view. In both cases, the role of intention is decisive.

Consent as a Moral Choice

Abelard is very consistent in his thinking concerning the notion that we can only be morally responsible for that which actually is in our power. Various desires are not in our power, because we cannot prevent their coming to mind. In a way, exterior acts are not in our power either, because they can be impeded independently of us. Moral evaluation then focuses on activity which *is* in our power in the sense that we ourselves make some decision or choice which leads to act according to that choice, if nothing prevents it. This activity of the mind between desiring and doing a deed is called a consent or an act of approval.²¹

Further, Abelard emphasizes consent's role as a moral act by noting that certain precepts are applied to the will, or the consent to action, and not to the actions themselves.²² Commandments and prohibitions that are relevant are

21 Ibid., 1.15.385–1.15.392: 'Nichil igitur ad augmentum peccati pertinet qualiscumque operum execucio, et nichil animam, nisi quod ipsius est, inquinat, hoc est consensus, quem solummodo esse peccatum diximus, non uoluntatem eum precedentem uel actionem operis subsequentem. Et si enim uelimus uel faciamus, quod non conuenit, non ideo tamen peccamus, cum hec frequenter sine consensu contingant, sicut econuerso consensus sine istis [. . .]'. See also *ibid.*, 1.9.224–1.9.235.

22 Ibid., 1.16.417–1.16.422: 'Et si diligenter consideremus, ubicumque opera sub precepto uel prohibicione concludi uidentur, magis hec ad uoluntatem uel consensum operum quam ad ipsa opera referenda sunt. Alioquin nichil, quod ad meritum pertineat, sub precepto poneretur, et tanto minus preceptione sunt digna, quanto minus in nostra potestate sunt constituta.' See also *ibid.*, 1.17.445–1.18.457.

found in the moral precepts of the Old Law: loving God and one's neighbour, not killing, not committing adultery, not lying and not stealing.²³ These precepts give exterior criteria for the moral rightness or wrongness of the consent to do something, although it often seems like the precepts would be applied to the deed itself. For example, the command is not that one should give alms to someone in need but that one should make a choice of will (*consensus*) to give alms in such a case. Ultimately, as Abelard notes referring to Augustine, "the Law commands nothing but charity, and forbids nothing but greed."²⁴ Choice, as Abelard seems to think, is a kind of evidence of charity by being within one's power and by being immune to accidental impediments to carrying out the choice.

I will now present two considerations which, to my mind, are meaningful to the full characterization of the idea of consent. The first concerns the way of using 'will' as a moral term; and the other aims to show how the intention included in consent assumes its role. Until now, 'will' has been used as a moral term when we have spoken of the will's consent. Along with this, Abelard seems to present another way of using it as a moral term. Namely, he underlines that it is precisely will (*voluntas*) that is morally decisive, when you are, for some real reason, no longer able to do something you have consented to do. In that case *voluntas* remains (*presto sit uoluntas*), because there has previously before the impediment been the morally decisive choice as a consent of the will.²⁵ In this connection, the term 'will' is clearly used as a moral term, and it is nicely applicable to Abelard's description of the moment of consenting. This moment consists of making up one's mind to not draw back in any way from doing a deed. And if at the moment of consent there is no opportunity to do the deed, the consent still remains in force by one's being inwardly

23 Ibid., 1.46.1211–1.46.1217, 48.1251–48.1260, 49.1284–49.1291, 17.454–18.457. See also Marenbon, *The Philosophy*, 263: "[...] although Abelard claimed to be giving a theory which covered both sins of commission and omission, he concentrated his attention on those sins which he could identify with a particular mental act of consenting to perform an action—especially those which involve the breaking of a prohibition."

24 Sc., 1.17.450–1.17.454: 'Quod et beatus diligenter considerans Augustinus omne preceptum uel prohibitionem ad caritatem uel cupiditatem potius quam ad opera reducens ait: "Nichil precipit lex nisi caritatem et nichil prohibet nisi cupiditatem." Translation in Sc., trans. Spade (1995), 12, 55. See also Sc., 1.18.457–1.18.460; and Müller, *Willensschwäche in Antike*, 442.

25 Sc., 1.18.457–1.18.460: 'Nichil quippe ad meritum refert, utrum elemosinam indigenti tribuas. Et te paratum tribuere caritas faciat et presto sit uoluntas, cum desit facultas, nec in te remaneat facere quod potes, quocumque prepediaris casu.' Cf. Perkams, *Liebe als Zentralbegriff*, 197.

ready to do it, if given the chance (*parati penitus, si facultas daretur, illud perficere*).²⁶ Thus moral will seems to refer to this inward readiness, which the consent leaves. The consent of someone then remains in force by his or her will as a kind of active or actual state of the will. In other words, once the choice has been made, something is left behind in the mind by that choice or consent, namely the will as a kind of readiness to act in some way.

Abelard offers quite a detailed discussion of what happens before the deed to which the sinful consent has been given. The discussion is very interesting because it reveals how he emphasizes the elements of pleasure (*delectacio*) which precede the consent (*Sc.* 1.22.571–1.22.579), and, the consent which leaves the will for evil as an actual state of the will (*ibid.*, 1.21.546–1.21.553).²⁷ The first-mentioned passage delineates between three phases in the process of reaching the performance of the sin. At the very beginning is (1) a suggestion (*suggestio*)

26 *Sc.*, 1.9.227–1.9.232: ‘Tunc uero consentimus ei, quod non licet, cum nos ab eius perpe-
tracione nequaquam retrahimus, parati penitus, si facultas daretur, illud perficere. In
hoc itaque proposito quisquis reperitur, reatus perfectionem incurrit, nec operis effectus
superadditus ad augmentum peccati quicquam addit [...].’

27 *Ibid.*, 1.22.571–1.22.579: ‘Sic et nos frequenter non ad peccandum, set ad peccati perpetra-
cionem hisdem passibus peruenimus, suggestione scilicet, hoc est exhortacione alicuius
nos incitantis ad aliquid agendum, quod non conuenit. Quod quidem agere si delecta-
bile esse nouerimus, ante ipsum eciam factum ipsius facti delectacione mens nostra
corripitur et in ipsa cogitacione per delectacionem temptatur. Cui uidelicet delectacioni
dum assentimus per consensum, peccamus. His tandem tribus ad operacionem peccati
peruenimus.’ *Ibid.*, 1.21.546–1.21.551: ‘[...] quatuor sunt, quae premisimus, ut ab inuicem
ipsa diligenter distingueremus: uicium scilicet animi, quod ad peccandum pronos efficit,
ac postmodum ipsum peccatum, quod in consensu mali uel contemptu dei statuimus,
deinde mali uoluntatem, denique mali operacionem.’ See also *ibid.*, 1.21.552–1.21.560.
Abelard was clear in that sin can only be found in the moment of the consent (a ‘con-
sent theory’ of sin). He did not then represent a so-called ‘stages theory’ of sin, as did,
for example, his teacher Anselm of Laon. See on this, Marenbon, *Medieval Philosophy*,
145–146: “Anselm of Laon favoured a ‘stages’ theory, in which the amount of culpability
increases as the sinner passes from the vaguest idea of performing the action, to actively
contemplating it, planning it and putting it into effect. [...] Like his older contemporaries
in the School of Laon, Abelard develops his moral psychology by looking at the act of sin-
ning (the developed theory is set out in *Scito teipsum* (Marenbon, 1997)). By contrast with
their stages theory, he identifies a particular moment at which someone, who was previ-
ously innocent, becomes guilty of a sin: the moment when the person *consents* to the act
that he or she knows is forbidden.” On twelfth and thirteenth-century discussions of the
eventual sinfulness of the first movements, see Knuuttila, *Emotions*, 178–195, here 180:
“The interest in questions pertaining to pre-passions and first movements was increased
by the fact that twelfth-century theologians had different views on whether impulses
toward forbidden acts were immediately sins or not.”

which drives us to a sinful deed. Then (2) our mind is tempted to consent to the deed by the thought of pleasure which, we believe, is connected to the deed. (3) By approving of this pleasure, i.e. by consenting to it, we sin. The second passage (which in Abelard's text comes first) includes four things in this process: (1) the mental vice, (2) the sin itself, i.e. the consent to evil or contempt of God, (3) the will for evil, and (4) the doing of the evil. If I read Abelard correctly, this mental vice (*viciū animi*) can be identified with the thought of pleasure believed to be connected to the deed (the second phase in the first-mentioned passage). With regard to the will for evil (the third phase in the second passage), Abelard seems to consider it a kind of result of consent in that the consent remains in force by one's will. Although Abelard does not seem to regard this will for evil directly as an act, it still resembles the second-order act of will the object of which is the first-order act of the consent of the will: one accepts or wills one's own consent and does not then repent it.²⁸

The second consideration concerns the role of intention as a part of consent or choice. It becomes clear when we look into Abelard's way of defining sin negatively.²⁹ Sin is defined by Abelard as not obeying the moral author when one should. It includes contempt for the Creator, which forms the core of a sin (*peccatum proprie*, see *Sc.* 1.10.241–1.10.244). Thus something is missing which should not be, namely obedience to God. I interpret this definition as saying that a right intention is missing in every sinful act; in this passage, the expression "on his account" (*propter ipsum*) refers to the intention, which is missing. A sinful act is properly the inner act of the choice. Accordingly, morally wrong action would be either the choice of not doing *propter Deum* what one believes one should do *propter Deum*, or the choice of not forsaking *propter Deum* what one believes one should forsake *propter Deum*.

The choice for the sake of God would, for its part, be either the choice of doing *propter Deum* what one believes one should do *propter Deum*, or the choice of forsaking *propter Deum* what one believes one should forsake *propter Deum*. Then the obedience to the divine author is that intention which is

28 A kind of repentance could also be possible, as can be seen in *Sc.*, 1.10.261–1.10.263: 'Sunt quos omnino piget in consensum concupiscencie uel malam uoluntatem trahi, et hoc ex infirmitate carnis uelle coguntur, quod nequaquam uellent uelle.'

29 *Ibid.*, 1.3.64–1.4.73: 'Peccatum itaque nostrum creatoris est contemptus, et peccare est creatorem contempnere, hoc est id nequaquam facere propter ipsum, quod credimus propter ipsum a nobis esse faciendum, uel non dimittere propter ipsum, quod credimus esse dimittendum. Cum itaque peccatum diffinimus abnegatiue, dicentes scilicet non facere uel non dimittere, quod conuenit, patenter ostendimus nullam esse substantiam peccati, quod in non esse potius quam in esse subsistat, ueluti si tenebras diffinientes dicamus absenciam lucis, ubi lux habet esse.'

missing in every sinful choice but included in every morally good one. If a person's will is opposed to divine will, he can through his choice prefer divine will to his own will and in that way show a willingness to obey the order-giver.³⁰ The choice in which one shows a willingness to obey God can be expressed in the form of a standard action structure, which is that "a person wills the means because she wills the goal." The moral formulation of this structure is therefore as follows: a person wills the means through which she can show the willingness to obey the order-giver. Abelard's well-considered view then is that one should show a willingness to follow the will of the order-giver in one's moral consents or choices. This is the deepest idea of the doctrine of intention, and Abelard himself expresses it in the following form: "Keeping the will of the order-giver, they didn't scorn him whose will they understood they were not going against."³¹

The intention of obedience which is implied or not implied in the choice forms an interior criterion for the choice's moral goodness or badness. I aim to elucidate this point next with the aid of Abelard's example of killing unwillingly, even though he primarily uses it to illustrate how the concepts of 'sin' and 'will' (or 'desire') are morally unconnected.

The Role of Intention and Knowledge in Abelard's Example of Killing Someone under Compulsion

In Abelard's example of killing unwillingly, an innocent man flees his cruel master for a long period of time to avoid being murdered. Finally, knowing that he will die himself unless he kills his master, he consents to, which he should not consent to.³² Abelard thinks that consenting to kill is wrong in this case, although 1) the man consents to it unwillingly (*nolens*) in the sense that he does not aim to kill his master, and it is wrong even though 2) the man consents to it under compulsion (*coactus*) in the sense that without this decision his master would kill him. The man consented to kill in self-defence, that is, because he wanted to save his life. Abelard refers to this intention to save one's

30 Ibid., 1.7.184–1.8.203.

31 Ibid., 1.20.535–1.20.536: 'Salua itaque uoluntate iubentis non eum contempserunt, cuius uoluntati se non esse contrarios intellexerunt.' Translation in Sc., trans. Spade (1995), 14, 65. Sc., 2.85.2244–2.85.2247: 'Sicut enim uirtutes uiciis contrarie sunt, ita peccatum, quod proprie dicitur dei contemptus, uidetur aduersum obediencie bono, id est uoluntas ad obediendum deo parata.'

32 Sc., 1.4.90–1.5.125.

life as doing it out of will.³³ He emphasizes that we can find no bad will in this example. The will or desire to save one's own life cannot be called bad in any way. The will of intending to kill would have been bad, but he had no such will. Abelard's example of killing unwillingly thus shows how there can be a morally bad consent of the will without a bad desire, to which the will would consent. This coincides with his emphasis on the separation of the concepts of 'sin' and 'will' according to the following lines: sins are voluntary in the sense that some desire is always fulfilled through the consent of the will to that desire, although the desire in question is not necessarily a bad one.

Here one could ask, why Abelard speaks at all about bad desires to which one can consent or not. He himself claims that various desires are in themselves indifferent; they are neither morally good nor bad. Abelard's use of language concerning bad desire could be understood as follows. The thought of fulfilling a desire must inevitably bring to one's mind something which is forbidden and which would be realized by the consent to that desire. In such a case, one can also call that desire bad. In the example of killing unwillingly, the man had a will to save his own life. This desire does not inevitably bring to one's mind something against the precept, meaning that it would be realized by consenting to that desire. We could, for example, easily and without moral blame imagine a case where someone consented to leaving his homeland because he wanted to save his life.

Abelard does not explicitly connect the knowable facts of the case to the moral consideration, but seems to give them a role as follows: if a person knows that he would die unless he kills another person, he cannot purely choose to save his own life without choosing also to kill, although he can say that he wills the former but not the latter.³⁴ What is mostly willed takes place in the light of the knowable facts: the man knows that he would die himself unless he kills.

33 Ibid., I.11.269–I.11.273.

34 Marenbon discusses the relationship between will and consent as follows: "The cases of sinning which interest Abelard are usually ones where the action is carried out reluctantly, because the agent would choose it under one of its descriptions, but not under another. [...] The man pursued by his lord would not choose to perform an act under only the description 'killing my lord,' nor would the adulterer choose to perform an act under only the description 'committing adultery'; and so neither of them can be said to will to perform those actions. In each case, however they do choose to perform the actions under the multiple descriptions under which they in fact cannot but regard them, 'killing my lord,' 'saving my life,' 'committing the sin of murder'; 'sleeping with a married woman,' 'sleeping with the woman I desire,' 'committing the sin of adultery.' Abelard's central point is that in any case where one of the descriptions under which I act is 'committing the sin of [...]' it should outweigh in my choosing all the other descriptions under which I

He knows that he does not want to die. He knows that he does not want to break the moral law either. The desire to live motivates him to decide to kill. This desire is seemingly also stronger than the fear of punishment. The will to obey moral law had no motivational force in his decision, with the result that he consented to that which should not be consented to.

Abelard also discusses an example of breaking the sixth precept.³⁵ As I understand him, knowable facts are also meaningful here: if one knows that the object of the desire is married, one cannot purely consent to lie with her without also consenting to commit adultery, although one can say that one wants the former but not the latter. Sins such as transgressing the sixth precept are an interesting example of how the quality of a moral agent's intention seems to play a role in determining whether a particular heavy sin is more or less damnable. As Abelard writes, there are men who "want to commit adultery rather than fornication, that is, to transgress by more rather than by less."³⁶ Thus if one consents to one's desire to commit adultery, it is more damnable than consenting to one's desire to fornicate.

But the question still remains: how can consenting to kill be sinful due to the intention included in the consent, as Abelard claims, although he does not even mention 'intention' in the text? When Abelard defined sin negatively, I stated that according to him *propter Deum* refers to a morally right intention which is missing in any sinful consent. Thus it was also absent in the consent of the man who killed his master. That man, it is true, did not show bad will by intending to break the fifth precept, but he did not intend to obey it either. The right intention of willing to obey the moral authority is missing, which seems to be a decisive criterion of the moral badness of the consent, in this case. The consent to kill was the choice of not forsaking *propter Deum* what (the man believes) should be forsaken *propter Deum*. This analysis is a deontological solution to the moral conflict case of *nolens peccare*, and it falls in line with Abelard's way of discussing the matter.

The case of consenting to kill concerns something morally wrong in the proper sense of the term: someone consciously chooses something or consents

would choose to perform the action were I performing it under each of those descriptions alone." See Marenbon, *The Philosophy*, 263–264.

35 Sc., 1.10.254–1.10.263.

36 Ibid., 1.10.259–1.10.261: '[...] et magis adulterari quam fornicari appetunt [in Luscombe's edition: "cupiunt"], hoc est magis quam minus excedere.' Translation in Sc., ed., trans., and notes, Luscombe (1971), 17.

to do something which he believes should not be chosen or consented to.³⁷ With respect to this, however, Abelard only says that the man consented to a killing he should not have consented to without emphasizing the epistemic role of one's belief concerning what is right or wrong.³⁸ It may sound as if the intention could not play so decisive a role here: what is wrong is wrong, regardless of the intentions. In a way this is true; namely, the intention to save one's life, which is not a bad intention, does not count as a mitigating circumstance. Abelard's view implies that one should not attempt to achieve an end by the wrong means. His solution is very strongly deontological: what is important is that we ourselves do not choose what we know to be wrong, no matter how bad the consequences of our choice are for us.

Abelard seems to divide intentions into two main groups. The first consists of those which proceed from the affections of the soul.³⁹ Honouring God and holding God in contempt seem to form those affections of the soul which lie at the root of the intention to do either. On the assumption that obedience is included in honouring, it can be argued that with morally good consent, one shows the willingness to obey divine will at the level of intention. And, with morally bad consent, for its part, one does not show the same willingness.

The second group consists of the intentions that are influenced by the bodily senses and have their origin in what human beings are in their fallen state. Abelard seems to regard fear and the desire for sensual pleasure as effects of the weakness of the flesh.⁴⁰ Thus a person can show in his consent a willingness to avoid something painful for himself; the fear directs his consent, as it did in our example of killing unwillingly (*coactus timore mortis*). Or, a person can show in his consent a willingness to experience some sensory pleasure, the desire for pleasure now directing his consent.

37 *Sc.*, 1.36.944–1.36.947: '[...] profecto secundum hoc, quod superius peccatum descripsimus esse—contemptum dei uel consentire in eo, in quo credit consensendum non esse [...]' See also *ibid.*, 1.3.64–1.4.73, and 17.445–17.450.

38 Marenbon, *The Philosophy*, 267: "For normal adults [...] there is no gap between what they should do for God and what they believe they should do for God. Abelard was able to hold this position because of his view that, through natural or revealed laws, everyone knows God's general precepts, and because of his idea of 'conscience,' which applies general laws to particular circumstances." For more on the conceptions of law and conscience in Abelard, see *ibid.*, 267–276.

39 *Sc.*, 1.3.58–1.3.62, 19.487–19.505, 17.447–18.463, 18.471–18.473, and 27.695–27.698.

40 *Ibid.*, 1.4.84–1.4.95, 5.113–5.116, 8.205–8.209, 10.261–10.263, and 27.695–27.698. Abelard pays attention to the weakness of human beings who are inconsistent in the following way: they may want to do that which they know is wrong and deserves to be punished, although they do not want the punishment itself. See *ibid.*, 1.10.247–1.10.253.

If the weakness of the flesh and its influence on consent is considerable—as Abelard seems to assume it could be—the role of the chooser becomes very narrow but is not entirely absent. Such a picture would seem to be applied to consent that reflects the weakness of men in the following way. Supposing that we have consented to a bad desire, we can be very ready to notice that we do not even want to desire that what we are forced to desire, and that we do not even want to have the consent that we unfortunately already have.⁴¹ Thus ‘will’ as a moral term is also connected to the phenomenon of repentance.

Conclusion: Some Complicated Nuances included in the Concept of Intention

The model of deontological ethics is basically clear in Abelard. The will of the order-giver is revealed in the precepts of divine law which give the exterior criteria of the moral right or wrong. The theme of moral deliberation is not discussed very clearly by him, but he seems to assign reason a role as a methodological means through which we understand our moral duties within divine law.⁴² The consideration of intention, however, runs through his ethics, although Abelard discusses it explicitly mainly in connection with exterior deeds.

In my interpretation, Abelard regards the willingness to obey God as a kind of morally good basic choice which is linked to some concrete moral choice as its intention component: through concrete moral choices a moral agent shows a willingness to obey. Intention, by being an essential part of consent, then has a double role as an interior criterion of moral action. First, it shapes or forms the moral value of the consent or choice, which can only be the proper moral act. Second, it specifies the real moral quality of the exterior act, which can thus have a derivative moral status on the basis of the consent preceding it. Ultimately, it is up to God to correctly judge our moral acts on the basis of our intentions.

41 As Abelard says: “There are people who are wholly ashamed to be drawn into consent to lust or into a bad will and are forced out of the weakness of the flesh to want what they by no means want to want.” See *ibid.*, 1.10.261–1.10.263; translation in *Sc.*, ed., trans., and notes Luscombe (1971), 17.

42 *Sc.*, 1.14.355–1.14.356: ‘Culpam quippe non habet ex contemptu dei, quia, quid agere debeat, nondum ratione percipit.’ See also *ibid.*, 1.20.514–1.20.515: ‘[...] nec enim quicquam absque rationabili causa fieri deus permittit necdum facere consentit [...]’.

However, some nuances within Abelard's overall view of ethics still complicate the role of intentions. Namely, it can, according to Abelard, sometimes be right to decide to act against a divine precept. In such a situation, a person must also believe that his decision pleases God and is then right. But this is not enough, since his decision must *de facto* be such that it pleases God.⁴³ The *de facto* criterion of the moral goodness of an intention is a topic to which Abelard pays attention in his discussion of the well-known example of Abraham. As regards this theme, I will comment only briefly.

Abraham was commanded by God to sacrifice his son, which obviously is against divine law. According to Abelard, the intention of God was God's will to test Abraham's love of God or his obedience, which did not include God's will that Abraham should sacrifice his son. God's intention was right, although the deed commanded was not.⁴⁴ In this situation Abraham seemed to have the very challenging task of understanding the will of the order-giver the right way and showing this understanding in his decision to sacrifice his son. According to Abelard, as I see it, Abraham succeeded in acting the right way (in this extraordinary case), if he believed that his decision to sacrifice pleased God

43 Ibid., 1.36.934–1.36.940: 'Non est itaque intencio bona dicenda, quia bona uidetur, set insuper quia talis est, sicut estimatur, cum uidelicet illud, ad quod tendit, sic deo placere credit, ut in hac insuper existimacione sua nequaquam fallatur. Alioquin ipsi eciam infideles sicut et nos bona opera haberent, cum ipsi eciam non minus quam nos per opera sua saluari uel se deo placere credant.'

44 Ibid., 1.20.509–1.21.545. The discussion ends up as follows (ibid., 1.21.537–1.21.545): 'Si ergo opera magis quam intencionem dei pensemus, uidebimus nonnumquam contra preceptum dei non solum uelle fieri, uerum eciam fieri aliquid—et hoc scienter sine ullo reatu peccati—, nec malam uoluntatem uel actionem ideo esse dicendam, quia preceptum dei non seruat in opere, cum a uoluntate precipientis non discrepat eius intencio, cui preceptio fit. Sicut enim intencio iubentis excusat ipsum, qui precipit fieri, quod tamen minime conuenit fieri, ita et eum, cui fit preceptio, excusat caritatis intencio.'

In the chapter "Das Verständnis des Willens Gottes," Perkams comments on Abelard's discussion of the sacrificing of Isaac: "Der Bezug auf die Rationalität, der Gottes Handeln innewohnt, steht auch hier im Mittelpunkt, 'denn weder gestattet Gott ohne vernünftigen Grund, dass etwas geschieht, noch stimmt er zu, es zu tun.' [The citation is from Sc., 1.20.514–1.20.515; ed., trans., and notes Luscombe (1971), 1.30.17–1.30.19.] Das verdeutlicht Abaelard am Beispiel von Isaaks Opferung (Gen 22), bei der Gott Abraham zuerst befiehlt, seinen Sohn zu opfern, und ihn dann anweist, das doch nicht zu tun. Beide Befehle haben einen guten Grund, der erste, Abrahams Glauben zu zeigen, der zweite, Isaaks Leben zu retten: [...] Das Ergebnis dieser komplizierten Argumentation ist, dass ein Mensch unter gewissen Bedingungen gegen Gottes Gebote verstossen kann, ohne dass er aus Bosheit, die zur Sünde im eigentlichen Sinn führt, oder aus Unwissenheit, die zwar zu schuldlosen, nicht aber zu guten Taten führt, handelt." See Perkams, *Liebe als Zentralbegriff*, 199–200.

and if he also correctly judged that God's intention did not include the will that he should sacrifice his son. Only in this way could Abraham's decision to sacrifice *de facto* be such that it would please God. In other words, his intentional choice should accurately and successfully reflect the actual divine intention in order to be a good moral choice that pleases God. Cognitive aspects concerning the judgement of the intention of God are then strongly implied in the decision of Abraham, who ought to understand not only what God willed him to choose but also what God actually willed through his command.

Obviously, Abelard regards God's pleasing as a reasonable action, which gives room for deliberation and the use of reason. He also seems to think that what pleases God is reasonable. But is it reasonable because it pleases God, or does it please God because it is reasonable? In any case, Abelard's ethics (as a kind of 'pleasing of God') is founded on an authoritative basis so strongly that it could be called a version of Divine Command ethics of its own kind.

‘He who kills himself liberates a wretch’: Abelard on Suicide

Juanita Feros Ruys

Alexander Murray has written of the “non-suicidal 99.998%” of the population of medieval Europe and “the happy people” in the Middle Ages “who did *not* commit suicide.”¹ Without making Murray’s formulations bear more weight than they were intended, this paper seeks to problematize the idea that only those who either attempted or committed suicide in the Middle Ages can provide us with an insight into what constituted the ‘suicidal’ in this period. It aims to demonstrate that emotional conglomerations of feelings, outlooks, and behaviours broadly associated with an impulse towards self-destruction both existed and were expressed in the Christian Middle Ages by individuals who did not lay hands upon themselves.

Certainly self-destruction was an issue that Abelard contemplated in manifold ways and forms, both in the established genres of didactic verse, lyric poetry, and epistolary correspondence, and in new genres of theological treatise, scholastic *quaestiones*, and first-person narratives of the self. Amongst these, Abelard’s most complex and interesting examinations of suicidal emotions appear in his more personal writings from the early 1130s, and this paper will particularly consider his *Carmen ad Astralabium*, a thousand-line poem of advice written for his son Astralabe; his *Historia calamitatum*, an open letter detailing his life story; and his *Planctus*, six poetic laments written for Heloise in the voices of Old Testament figures. These texts reveal that in the Middle Ages, suicide was not necessarily a concept that was unthinkable, but it was one that remained largely unspoken and sometimes—even for the most articulate of writers—ultimately unspeakable.

Carmen ad Astralabium

The most immediately striking statement concerning suicide in Abelard’s writings comes in his long poem of advice for his son, the *Carmen ad Astralabium*. The themes of death and preparedness for it recur throughout the thousand

¹ Alexander Murray, *Suicide in the Middle Ages*, vol. 2: *The Curse on Self-Murder* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 2 and 369.

lines of this poem, as do meditations on old age and the aging process with respect to oncoming death. Some of these reference traditional sources such as the Classical writings of Cicero (*De senectute*) and Seneca (Letters to Lucilius), and the early medieval didactic schooltext, the *Disticha Catonis*.² Yet sitting—perhaps uneasily—at the heart of Abelard's poem are two extraordinary distichs that appear to advocate suicide as a liberation from the pain and misery of earthly suffering:

561. *Liberat a pena miserum qui interficit ipsum*
 562. *Si pena penitus uita futura uacat;*
 563. *Est igitur pietas misere non parcere uite*
 564. *Si post hanc uitam nulla sequatur eam.*³

What do these two distichs actually mean? The two pentameter lines beginning with fairly significant 'ifs' (*Sis*) complicate the picture markedly. The first distich declares: "He who kills himself liberates a wretch from torment—if the life to come is wholly free from torment." But we know, as Abelard surely did, that in twelfth-century theology the life to come is not wholly free from punishment for those who take their own lives. The faux-uncertainty of pentameter line, which undercuts the bold statement of the hexameter line, may be the point the scribe of one of the manuscripts of the *Carmen*, Berlin, *Staatsbibliothek, Preussischer Kulturbesitz*, lat. oct. 172, intends to underline when in place of the indicative *uacat* he writes the subjunctive *uacet*—"if it *should* (or *could*) be wholly free from torment" (fol. 9^v)—with the unspoken rider understood: of course, it is not. Abelard then produces the same pattern of audacious declarative and undercutting subjunctive in the next distich: "It is therefore a piety [or: a duty] not to spare a wretched life—if after this life no other should follow it." Yet clearly another life, in contemporary understandings, does follow this one.

So what is Abelard actually saying? To some extent, these repeated 'ifs' debating death recall chapter 4 of Ambrose's *De bono mortis*, where Ambrose's

2 Juanita Feros Ruys, "Medieval Latin Meditations on Old Age: Rhetoric, Autobiography, and Experience," in *Old Age in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Interdisciplinary Approaches to a Neglected Topic*, ed. Albrecht Classen, Fundamentals of Medieval Culture 2 (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2007), 171–200, and on Abelard, see 186–191.

3 All quotations and translations from Peter Abelard, *Carmen ad Astralabium* [*ad Ast.*] are from ed. and trans. Ruys (forthcoming). For an earlier critical edition of the entire manuscript tradition see *ad Ast.*, available in José M. A. Rubingh-Bosscher, ed., *Peter Abelard: Carmen ad Astralabium. A Critical Edition*, PhD diss. (Groningen: University of Groningen, 1987).

repeated interrogatives (*Quid, quomodo*) and conditional 'si'-clauses argue for the value of death as the end both of sin and of pain and suffering (*dolor atque cruciatus*).⁴ More to the point, the paralleled back-and-forth play of Abelard's two distichs seem almost to form a *sic et non* on suicide—which is not surprising, given that Abelard did devote a *quaestio* of his *Sic et non* to precisely this matter. One of the last questions of the *Sic et non* (number 155 of 158) is "That it is lawful for a man to lay hands upon himself for a number of reasons, and against."⁵ As is common with many of the *quaestiones* in the *Sic et non*, Augustine is Abelard's key source here, with ten out of the total thirteen citations coming from him, and nine of those drawn from the pages of *De civitate Dei* (specifically, book 1, chapters 20–33). The contrary voice in the two distichs on suicide from the *Carmen*, the voice that silently supplies the culturally understood responses to Abelard's 'if' clauses, seems to belong to Augustine, having been drawn from *De civitate Dei*, 1.26—but from a passage that Abelard has specifically omitted from his survey in the *Sic et non* of anti-suicidal arguments in Augustine. Abelard does include quite a long extract from *De civitate Dei*, 1.26,11, but stops short of quoting the lines that necessarily impact upon his bold statements in the *Carmen* and effectively close down the possibilities he has sought to open in the 'if' clauses there. These lines from Augustine are:

... no man ought to inflict on himself voluntary death, for this is to escape the ills of time by plunging into those of eternity; ... no man should put an end to this life to obtain that better life we look for after death, for those who die by their own hand have no better life after death.⁶

4 Ambrose, *De bono mortis*, in *Sancti Ambrosii Opera*, pars 1: *Exameron; De paradiso; De Cain et Abel; De Noe; De Abraham; De Isaac; De bono mortis*, ed. Karl Schenkl, CSEL 32.1 (Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1897), 703–753, here 714–715.

5 'Quod liceat homini inferre sibi manus aliquibus de causis, et contra.' See *Sic et non*, ed. Boyer and McKeon (1976–1977), 518–522. This *quaestio* comes before the oddly doubled *quaestiones* 156, 'Quod nulla de causa liceat Christianis quemquam interficere et contra' (translation: "That for no reason is it permitted to Christians to kill anyone, and against"), and 157, 'Quod liceat hominem occidere et non' (translation: "That it is allowed to kill a man, or not"). 'Manus sibi inferre' is a common medieval periphrasis for suicide. See Alexander Murray, *Suicide in the Middle Ages*, vol. 1: *The Violent Against Themselves* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 35.

6 Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 29. '... [N]e eminens spontaneam mortem sibi inferre debere uelut fugiendo molestias temporales, ne incidat in perpetuas ... neminem uelut desiderio uitae melioris, quae post mortem speratur, quia reos suae mortis melior post mortem uita non suscipit.' See Augustine, *De civitate Dei, Books I & II*, ed. and trans. P. G. Walsh (Oxford: Oxbow, 2005), 80.

But despite the multiple voices of Abelard (*pro* and *contra*) and Augustine (implicit but unattributed) that inform the passage on suicide in the *Carmen*, a question remains: is there a conclusion here that Abelard wishes to leave to his son, or is this merely the contemplative vacillation of a medieval Hamlet *avant la lettre*, prompting himself on the one hand to end a wretched life (" 'tis a consummation devoutly to be wished"), and yet fearing on the other "in that sleep of death what dreams may come"?⁷

It is difficult to gain any additional insight to the meaning of these two distichs from their context within the *Carmen* because the poem as a whole is so sinuous in construction. Connections between distichs or sets of distichs can be tenuous and the process of identifying the links between them like following the thought of a brilliant mind as it flits lightly from one subject to the next, one idea sparking off its successor through suggestion and verbal collocation. In this case, Abelard's turn to suicide seems to have been prompted by his contemplation of final things in the preceding distich:

559. A wise man contemplates the sunset, a foolish man the dawn;
560. indeed the end of a matter occasions songs of praise.⁸

This in turn may (or may not) have arisen out of the consideration of the temptation of Adam and Eve which culminated in original sin and hence mortality for the human race (lines 553–556).⁹

Providing further perspective on the meaning of these two distichs is their medieval reception history. Of the four manuscripts that make up the 'long' (and most authentic) recension of the *Carmen*, three transmit these two distichs.¹⁰ However, only two of these three manuscripts, Paris, *Bibliothèque nationale de France*, n.a. lat. 561, and the Berlin manuscript, transmit these two distichs more or less as printed above. The third, Madrid, *Biblioteca Nacional de España*, 9210, makes a telling emendation to the key line, rendering it as: *Liberat a pena miserum qui interficit illum*. This alters the meaning entirely, turning it from a reflection on suicide to a justification for murder: "He who

7 William Shakespeare, *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, updated ed., ed. Philip Edwards, The New Cambridge Shakespeare (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 3.1.63–3.1.64 and 3.1.66.

8 'Occasum sapiens, stultus considerat ortum;/ Finis quippe rei cantica laudis habet.'

9 And this, in its turn, seems to have been prompted by a general antifeminist tirade on the seductions of women and their unsuitability for leadership in ll. 547–552—all of which clearly demonstrate the subtle and interconnected flow of ideas in the poem.

10 The fourth, Paris, *Bibliothèque nationale de France*, n.a. lat. 3061, comes to an untimely halt some time earlier at l. 405 of the poem.

kills a wretch liberates *him* from torment." It is significant that to this twelfth-century scribe, having Abelard advise his son towards murder actually made more sense than to have him advocate suicide in times of trouble. Indeed, it reveals how unthinkable Abelard condoning suicide has continued to be that the poem's twentieth-century editor, José M. A. Rubingh-Bosscher, notes the Madrid manuscript's alternative readings *fortasse recte* (perhaps correct[ly]).¹¹

There remain two other key recensions of the *Carmen* to be considered in this regard, both of which are different forms of abridgement of the longer original. Lines 561–564 have not proven popular with the compilers of either of these recensions. They are omitted by the four manuscripts that form Recension II, all of which transmit the preceding lines 557–558, and three of which transmit the succeeding lines 565–570. They are transmitted in only a single Recension III manuscript, London, *British Library*, Burney, 216, having been overlooked by the other two Recension III manuscripts. Yet this London manuscript transmits them as the Madrid manuscript does: as an advocacy to murder rather than suicide, reading *illum* in place of *ipsum*. Clearly medieval readers and users of the *Carmen* struggled (or, perhaps, preferred *not* to struggle) with Abelard's enigmatic metaphysical consideration of the act of self-killing and its possible consequences in the afterlife.

As noted above, in lines 561–564 of the *Carmen* Abelard appears to advocate suicide—but only *if* after this life no other should follow it, and *if* such a life to come should be wholly free from torment. Later in the poem, Abelard returns to these matters, and this time negates these two conditional clauses he had earlier raised. Here he expressly advises his son to contemplate both the certain fact of a future life and the possible fact that the suffering there could be worse than it is on earth:

689. Into what region you will be forced to go when you die
 690. let your mind consider carefully while you are alive:
 691. what will be the state, what sort of dwelling there will be for this
 life
 692. to which death prepares so difficult an entrance,
 693. in which, if it should befall us to live in greater pain,
 694. I judge nothing worse than our lot.¹²

¹¹ Rubingh-Bosscher, ed., *ad Ast.* (1987), 136.

¹² 'In quam dum moreris regionem cogeris ire/ Mens tua dum uiuis cogitet assidue:/ Quis status illius, qualis sit mancio uite/ Cui tam difficilem mors parat introitum/ In qua si grauius contingat uiuere nobis,/ Sorte nichil nostra censeo deterius.'

This is a bleak outlook that seems to close down the possibilities of escape by suicide raised earlier in the poem. Here the same uncertainty about future punishment evident in the earlier lines is still articulated (in another 'if'-clause), but with less potential for action. In the earlier lines, there remained the desperate hope of suicide by which the 'wretch' could at least, in Hamlet's words, take "take arms against a sea of troubles, and by opposing, end them"; here there is nothing but the despairing recognition that suicide cannot be a solution, given the eternal certainties presented by Christian theology. Pagan philosophers like Cicero and Seneca could face death (self-inflicted or otherwise) with equanimity because for them nothing worse lay beyond it. Thus Seneca could write: "What is death? Either an end or a passing over. I fear neither to cease to be nor to change";¹³ while Cicero could similarly comment that there were only two options: death could either extinguish the soul or it lead it to its eternal future, but there was no third eventuality.¹⁴ By contrast, Abelard is hampered by his Christian inheritance and its threat of future punishment. For him, in place of action, now only resignation is possible: we can but accept that if our suffering in the next life is worse than in this one, then our 'lot' is a dire one indeed.

Here the choice of the word 'sors' is also telling: at the moment when Abelard closes down the Classical, pagan option of suicide by reference to a Christian afterlife, he also depicts that Christianized future in terms of the pagan notion of 'lot' or 'fate'. He appears to 'kick against the pricks' in retaliation at his limited options, at first formulating the certainties of Christian doctrine as uncertainties ('if...'), and then vainly likening providence to chance or lot. These textual ploys appear to be the only means left by which he can express his anguish that in a Christian world, he can neither act to reduce his pain by ending his life, nor be assured, even if he does suffer through this life to its natural end, of less pain in the life to come.

13 'Mors quid est? aut finis aut transitus. Nec desinere timeo [...] nec transire.' See Seneca, *Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales*, ed. L. D. Reynolds, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965), Letter 65.24.

14 Cicero, *De senectute*, 19.66: "quae aut plane neglegenda est si omnino exstinguit animum, aut etiam optanda si aliquo eum deducit ubi sit futurus aeternus; atqui tertium certe nihil inveniri potest." Cicero, *Cato Maior De senectute*, ed. J. G. F. Powell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

Historia calamitatum and Letters

Yet we cannot dismiss this unparalleled medieval consideration of the possibility of suicide as something of an aberration of Abelardian thought to be found only in the difficult and little studied reaches of the *Carmen ad Astralabium*. Nor is it a solution to try to make *ipsum* mean *illum* or to suggest that the former is a scribal mistake for the latter, because these lines in the *Carmen* are not the only place in Abelard's writings that this particular expression of longing for death appears. In his Letter 5 to Heloise, Abelard deals with Heloise's declaration in her Letter 4 that she constantly fears for his death. On the contrary, Abelard berates her,

had you any hope of divine mercy being shown me, you would be all the more anxious for me to be freed from the troubles of this life as you see them to be intolerable. At least you must know that whoever frees me from life will deliver me from the greatest suffering. What I may afterwards incur is uncertain, but from what [great burdens] I shall be set free is not in question. Every unhappy life is happy in its ending, and those who feel true sympathy and pain for the anxieties of others want to see these ended.¹⁵

Not only the sentiment, but also the very vocabulary of the *Carmen*, lines 561–564, appear in this declaration, as the highlighted words reveal:

*Quin etiam, si quam de divina erga me misericordia spem haberes, tanto amplius ab huius vitae aerumnis liberari me cuperes, quanto eas conspicias intolerabiliores. Certum quippe tibi est quod quisquis ab hac vita me liberet, a maximis poenis eruet. Quas postea incurram incertum est, sed a quantis absolver dubium non est. Omnis vita misera iucundum exitum habet, et quicumque aliorum anxietatibus vere compatiuntur et condolent, eas finiri desiderant.*¹⁶

Here the specific evocation of a suicidal impulse is lacking, perhaps because the content has been tailored to a particular correspondent in the context of a pastoral document for a convent, but otherwise the thought matches that of

15 HC, trans. Radice with Clanchy (2003), 77, with my emendation to give a better sense of the weight of 'quantis.' Hereafter all the English citations from Abelard's HC and correspondence will be from this edition.

16 Muckle, "The Personal Letters," 47–94, here 86.

the *Carmen*. That is, for Abelard death would be a liberation from suffering—although he remains uncertain what, for him, might lie beyond death’s door.

Yet in so expressing his longing for the release of death from temporal trials, Abelard was well aware of how such a position stood in relation to the question of suicide and how such a mindset was judged, since he dealt with precisely this matter in *Questio* CLV of his *Sic et non*. Key here is the sixth citation where Abelard quotes Augustine (*De civitate Dei*, 1.22) to the effect that we would admire the greatness of mind of people who are capable of undertaking self-murder, were it not that closer inspection of their motives reveals, in fact, the opposite—pusillanimity: “For on the contrary a weak mind is revealed, which is not able to bear either the hard suffering of its body or the fatuous opinion of the crowd.”¹⁷ This is something of a self-indictment and raises the question of Abelard’s potentially suicidal mindset, since these two things—bodily pain and malicious gossip—are precisely what he repeatedly declares himself unable to bear in his *Historia*. Here Abelard measures the indignity done to his reputation in the scurrilous gossip of others as greater than the physical suffering of the castration itself:¹⁸

I suffered more from their sympathy than from the pain of my wound, and felt the misery of my mutilation less than my shame and humiliation . . . I thought . . . how fast news of this unheard-of disgrace would spread over the whole world. (17)¹⁹

[. . .] I wept much more for the injury done to my reputation than for the damage to my body. (25)²⁰

Yet though perhaps I suffered less physical pain [from the wound], I am now the more distressed for the calumny I must endure. My agony is less for the mutilation of my body than for the damage to my reputation. (37, my emendation)²¹

17 ‘Magis enim mens infirma deprehenditur, quae ferre non potest vel duram sui corporis severitatem vel stultam vulgi opinionem.’ See *Sic et non*, 35–37, ed. Boyer and McKeon (1976–1977), 519.

18 Murray notes ‘disgrace (public)’ as one of the motivating factors of suicides identified in medieval legal records. See Murray, *Suicide in the Middle Ages*, vol. 1, 428.

19 All references to the *HC* are from *HC*, ed. Monfrin (1967): ‘multo amplius ex eorum compassione quam ex vulneris lederer passione, et plus erubescientiam quam plagam sentirem, et pudore magis quam dolore affligerer. Occurrebat animo [. . .] quanta dilatatione hec singularis infamia universum mundum esset occupatura.’ See *ibid.*, 80, 597–609.

20 *Ibid.*, 89, 923–924: ‘et longe amplius fame quam corporis detrimentum plangebam.’

21 *Ibid.*, 102, 1387–1389: ‘sed quod tunc forte minus pertuli ex vulnere, nunc ex detractatione diutius plector, et plus ex detrimento fame quam ex corporis crucior diminutione.’

It is telling in this regard that where Augustine's text noted that it was difficult for weak minds to bear the hard *servitude* of the body (*duram sui corporis servitutem*),²² all the codices of the *Sic et non* (which most likely reflect Abelard's own memory of his exemplar) read *severitatem* here. In other words, when Abelard recalled Augustine's argument, he remembered it in terms of a physical pain endured by the body.

Nor is it difficult to read in the remainder of the *Historia* a powerful expression of a psyche under pressure and battling with suicidal emotions. Abelard does not here expressly claim suicidal thoughts or cite suicide as an option, but it is an undercurrent readily perceptible in his expression. His language is replete with terms well recognized in both patristic and medieval theology, as well as medieval legal records, as indicative of a suicidal state-of-mind, such as *dolor*, *desperatio*, and *desolatio*. In addition, he relates a range of behaviours recognized as suicidal, such as unrestrained weeping and groaning:

Everyone knows now, I think, of this anguish which my tormented heart suffered night and day. (34)²³

I used to weep as I thought of the wretched, useless life I led, as profitless to myself as to others. (34)²⁴

I was in deep despair when I remembered what I had fled from and considered what I had met with now; my former troubles were as nothing in retrospect, and I often used to groan and tell myself that I deserved my present sufferings for deserting the Paraclete, the Comforter, and plunging myself into certain desolation. (35)²⁵

There is no question that Abelard's expressed state of mind in these citations effectively fulfils the classic medieval description of *acedia*, namely a sense of profitlessness and weariness of life that springs from deep sadness (*tristitia*) and leads to despair (*desperatio*).²⁶ *Acedia* was powerfully associated with

22 Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, Books I & II, 70.

23 'Quanta enim anxietate [...] cor meum die ac nocte cruciaret [...] neminem jam latere arbitror.' See HC 1255–1258, 99.

24 'Considerabam et plangebam quam inutilem et miseram vitam ducerem, et quam infructuose tam mihi quam aliis viverem.' See HC 1283–1285, 99.

25 'Desperabam penitus, cum recorderar que fugerem et considerarem que incurrerem; et priores molestias quasi jam nullas reputans, crebro apud me ingemiscens dicebam: "Merito hec patior, qui Paraclitum, id est consolatorem, deserens, in desolationem certam me intrusi." [...]' See HC 1291–1296, 99–100.

26 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 2a–2ae, Q. 20, a. 4, co: 'Et quia acedia est tristitia quaedam deiectiva spiritus, ideo per hunc modum desperatio ex acedia generatur.'

the suicidal impulse in the medieval world.²⁷ In terms of the ability for such emotions to be expressed and understood, it is interesting that the standard English translation of the *Letters* should downplays the emotional crisis in the last passage, turning the self-accusatory cry that breaks unexpectedly from the narrative flow of the text ("Deservedly do I suffer these things . . . I have thrust myself into certain desolation") into more benign oratio obliqua ("tell myself that I deserved my present sufferings . . .").

Following the burning of his book on the Trinity at the Council of Soissons and his imprisonment at the monastery of Saint Médard, Abelard relates a psychic break that actually brought him to the brink of madness. As he rages here against God, his language overflows once more with terms associated with the suicidal impulse: *insanus*, *furibundus*, *dolor*, *desperatio*²⁸—indeed, all these words occur in just two sentences:

[...] with what great gall of spirit, with what great bitterness of mind, maddened, did I blame you, and frenzied, did I accuse you [...] With what great grief I raged, with what great shame was I distressed, by what great despair was I thrown into confusion, I could feel then, but cannot express now.²⁹

More significantly, this language is directly comparable with Abelard's earlier description in his narrative of the near homicidal frenzy which Heloise's uncle Fulbert suffered when he discovered that Abelard had abducted his niece: "but after his return her uncle, like one sent mad, with what great grief he raged,

For a discussion see Robert Miner, *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions: A Study of Summa Theologiae 1a2ae 22–48* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 228.

27 Siegfried Wenzel, *The Sin of Sloth: Acedia in Medieval Thought and Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960), 88, 114 (which mentions the several instances of *acedia* associated with suicide in Caesarius of Heisterbach's early thirteenth-century *Dialogus miraculorum*), 123, 160, and 178. See also Cassian, *Institutes*, 9.9, where he traces the trajectory from sadness through despair to suicide in the figure of Judas.

28 See, for instance, Murray, *Suicide in the Middle Ages*, vol. 1, 162–168 with reference to terms in suicide cases like 'dolore nimia' and 'furore ductus'; see also Sara M. Butler, "Degrees of Culpability: Suicide Verdicts, Mercy, and the Jury in Medieval England," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 36 (2006), 263–290, here 274 with reference to terms in suicide cases like 'furiosus,' and 'insania.'

29 'Quanto tunc animi felle, quanta mentis amaritudine te ipsum insanus arguebam, te furibundus accusabam [...] Quanto autem dolore estuarem, quanta erubescencia confunderer, quanta desperatione perturbarer, sentire tunc potui, proferre non possum.' My translation. See *HC* 914–919, 89.

with what great shame he was afflicted, no-one but one who has experienced it could comprehend.”³⁰ If in this case Fulbert’s madness led to him laying violent hands upon another, resulting in Abelard’s castration, it is reasonable to consider whether in Abelard’s similar frenzy of mind—expressed in precisely the same terminology—there might not have lain a similar impulse to lay violent hands upon himself.

It is highly significant that in the midst of this contemplation of his suffering, Abelard lights upon the solution of self-exile, explicitly linking it with his state of despair:

Often, God knows, I fell into *such a state of despair* that I thought of quitting the realm of Christendom and going over to the heathen . . . When I was continuously harassed by these anxieties and as a last resort thought of taking refuge with Christ among Christ’s enemies . . . (33, my emphasis)³¹

As writers such as Ovid and Boethius reveal, in classical and medieval thought there is very close contiguity between the states of exile and death.³² So if enforced exile tropes death, does Abelard’s longing here for self-imposed exile trope suicide? Borne of despair and constituting a final extreme (*extremum*—a word strongly associated with death in Medieval Latin³³) option, is this evocation of exile really a way for Abelard to express what would otherwise be inexpressible—his desire for the release of (self-imposed) death from suffering?

It is clear from others of Abelard’s writings that for him, drawing from the traditional Christian perspective of life on earth as a form of exile from the heavenly homeland, choosing exile can only be the act of one who chooses

30 ‘Avunculus autem ejus post ipsius recessum quasi *in insaniam* conversus, *quanto estuaret dolore*, quanto afficeretur pudore, nemo nisi experiendo cognosceret.” See HC 400–402, 74. Emphasis added by author.

31 ‘Sepe autem, Deus scit, *in tantam lapsus sum desperationem*, ut Christianorum finibus excessis ad gentes transire disponerem [...] Cum autem tantis perturbationibus incessanter affligerer atque hoc extremum mihi superesset consilium ut apud inimicos Christi ad Christum confugerem.’ See HC 1221–1231, 97–98. Emphasis added by author.

32 See, for instance, Sabine Grebe, “Why Did Ovid Associate His Exile with a Living Death?,” *Classical World* 103 (2010), 491–509; and Jo-Marie Claassen, *Displaced Persons: The Literature of Exile from Cicero to Boethius* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 10–11 and 239–240.

33 See, for example, R. E. Latham, *Revised Medieval Latin Word-List from British and Irish Sources* (London: Oxford University Press, repr. with Supp., 2004), 182: ‘extrem-’; *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources* (London: Oxford University Press, 1986), Fascicule 3.d–e, 879: ‘extremus,’ 3.

(eternal) death. Abelard writes about such people in his *Sermo* 6 where he likens them to beasts who are ruled by their appetites rather than their reason (*qui sensibus magis quam ratione reguntur*) and who are forgetful of the heavenly home for which they have been formed (*cœlestium obliti ad quæ sunt conditi*).³⁴ Exile is thus constituted as a place of eternal separation from heaven—truly a place ‘beyond the borders of Christendom’ (*Christianorum finibus excessis*)—which is another way of indicating a death that merits eternal separation from God in Hell, as suicide does. As Abelard notes: “We hasten through exile to our homeland, just as we hurry through death towards life.”³⁵ When in his *Historia* Abelard contemplates exile, then, it seems clear that lying unexpressed and, no doubt, inexpressible, beneath this desire is really a longing for death.

Planctus

Compared with the repertoire of suicidal pathologies evoked by Abelard in his *Historia*, his *Quaestio* on suicide in the *Sic et non* manifests as rather dry and almost cerebral. Indeed, with its homogeneity of references, most of them drawn from a handful of consecutive chapters in a single one of Augustine’s texts, the most interesting thing about it may be the fact that Abelard clearly mined it for lexis and imagery when he came to describe the death of the daughter of Jephthah in his *Planctus uirginum Israel super filia Iepte Galadite*. Why Abelard should have chosen imagery associated with suicide to picture this girl’s death deserves consideration, especially when he had already devoted one of his six *Planctus* to Samson, a key figure around whom theological and philosophical questions of suicide revolved in the Middle Ages. By contrast, Jephthah’s daughter was not traditionally considered a suicide—perhaps because in the biblical form of her story, she remains almost entirely without agency, merely the pliant victim of her father’s vow and will (Judges 11. 34–40). Indeed, even when mentioned in *Quaestio* CLV of Abelard’s *Sic et non*, Jephthah’s action in sacrificing his daughter is considered in terms of whether it constituted justifiable homicide on his part, not suicide on hers.³⁶

34 *Serm.* 6.178.426B.

35 *Ibid.*, 6.178.426A: ‘Per exsilium properamus ad patriam, et quasi per mortem festinamus ad vitam.’

36 *Sic et non*, 155, ed. Boyer and McKeon (1976–1977), 518. Abelard refers to Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, *Books I & II*, 1.21: ‘Queritur utrum pro iussu Dei sit habendum quod Iephte filiam, quae occurrit ei, occidit, cum se id vovisset immolaturum Deo quod ei revertenti de proelio victori primitus occurrisset.’ See similarly William of Auxerre’s *Summa aurea*, mentioned by Murray, *Suicide in the Middle Ages*, vol. 2, 191, n. 10, and 220.

In the *Planctus uirginum*, however, Jephthah's daughter takes the entire middle third of this longest of Abelard's laments to argue powerfully the case for her death, adducing arguments that range from biblical history (Abraham and Isaac) to gender politics.³⁷ In this regard, she almost goads her father to the act, twice accusing him of being less of a man than she is: "As in sex, so in spirit, be now a man, I pray!" and "What the tender maiden does not fear to bear, let the right arm of the man suffer to inflict."³⁸ In the end she herself hands her father the sword with which he will slay her, a gesture that blurs the line between suicide and homicide in her case, and one that Abelard emphasizes by noting twice: "At once she seized the naked blade which she delivered to her father"; "the sword she herself handed over cuts her down on bended knees."³⁹

Even more striking are the similarities between the description of the death of Jephthah's daughter at the end of the *planctus*, and two of the cited sources in Abelard's *Sic et non* Q. CLV on suicide. Citation two here is taken from Eusebius's *Historia ecclesiastica*, and treats the story of the virginal Apollonia who threw herself into a fire rather than be corrupted by her persecutors (Book VI, cap. xxxiv). Here the pyre built up to receive Apollonia (*congestis deinde lignis exstruxerunt rogum*) matches that prepared for Jephthah's daughter: *aram extruat, ignem acceleret* (line 91). When Apollonia sees that the pyre has blazed up (*ut rogum vidit esse succensum*), she snatches herself from the hands of her captors (*repente se e manibus eripuit impiorum*) and hurls herself upon it of her own free will (*atque in ignem sponte prosiluit*). Jephthah's daughter also stands on the steps before a pyre that has blazed up (*in are succense gradibus*, line 117), she snatches the sword to deliver it to her father (*ensem nudum arripuit*; line 111), and her behaviour towards her death can clearly be described as *sponte* (willing). In Apollonia's case, the outcome of her death is the wonderment of her captors for the willingness of a mere woman to face death.⁴⁰ The same consideration of gender reversal in terms of bravery and fear is highlighted in Abelard's *Planctus* over Jephthah's daughter:

37 Juanita Feros Ruys, "Ut sexu sic animo: The Resolution of Sex and Gender in the *Planctus* of Abelard," *Medium Ævum* 75, no. 1 (2006), 1–23, esp. 9–11.

38 'Vt sexu sic animo/ uir esto nunc, obsecro!' Ibid., 61–62: 'Quod ferre non trepidat uirgo tenera/ inferre sustineat uiri dextera.' *Repentant Abelard*, ed. and trans. Ruys (forthcoming), 44–45.

39 Ibid., 111: 'Mox quem patri detulit ensem nudum arripuit.' Ibid., 118–119: 'Traditus ab ipsa gladius/ peremit hanc flexis genibus.'

40 *Sic et non*, 155, ed. Boyer and McKeon (1976–1977), 518, citation 2: 'promptior inventa est ad mortem femina quam persecutor ad poenam.'

15. O maiden, more to marvelled at than lamented!
 16. O how rare the man her equal!⁴¹

The maids of Israel in the *Planctus uirginum* then react to the slaughter of Jephthah's daughter by crying out to Jephthah:

120. *O mentem amentem iudicis!*
 121. *O zelum insanum principis!*

Abelard has clearly sourced this cry from Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 1.33, which he excerpts as Item 11 of *Quaestio* CLV of his *Sic et non* where he cites: *O mentes amentes! quis est hic tantus non error sed furor?*⁴² Tellingly, however, he then goes on to quote Augustine from a different chapter of the *De civitate Dei* (1.26) dealing with the suicides of holy women, undertaken to preserve their chastity. In this passage Augustine struggles with the issue of how, or indeed whether, one should judge the inner motivations of those who choose death in this way, since it cannot be known whether they acted out of obedience to divine command, rather than having been led astray by error. The editors of the *Sic et non*, Blanche B. Boyer and Richard McKeon, have combined these two extracts, separate in Augustine (1.33 and 1.26), into the one citation in Abelard (*Quaestio* CLV, Item 11), and it would appear that this is in fact an accurate reflection either of Abelard's memory of the text, or the way he wished to present it. The citation from *De civitate Dei*, 1.33, *O mentes amentes... furor*, is unlikely to have stood by itself as an item in a study of suicide, since it does not of itself reference the act. It also seems probable that the section from *De civitate Dei*, 1.26, which follows *O mentes amentes* in the *Sic et non*, has genuinely been attracted to it to form a single quotation; if not, then this passage alone would have been cited out of order, since the remaining eight quotations from Augustine's *De civitate Dei* in this *Quaestio* are cited in the sequence they appear in the original. What this means is that in both his *Planctus uirginum* and *Sic et non*, Abelard has associated a cry berating madness with the willed self-destruction of a young woman. Furthermore, in the passage of *De civitate Dei*, 1.26, cited by Abelard, Augustine moves from consideration of the suicides of holy virgins to contemplation of the suicide of Samson (*De Samson aliud nobis fas non est*

41 'O stupendam plus quam flendam uirginem!/ O quam rarum illi uirum similem!'; see *Repentant Abelard*, ed. and trans. Ruys (forthcoming).

42 *Sic et non*, 155., ed. Boyer and McKeon (1976–1977), 520, citation 11, lines 63–64.

credere),⁴³ just as Abelard's *Planctus uirginum*, which all but concludes with the Augustinian cry of *O mentem amentem*, then leads into his *Planctus Israel super Samson*.

With the lament over Jephthah's daughter, Abelard took a story that was traditionally about the dangers and consequences of rashly made vows and rendered it into a powerful meditation upon suicide and preparedness by an individual for death. The structure, logic, and language of the representation of the death of Jephthah's daughter, and the turn of thought from her to Samson, are strongly associated with the choice and arrangement of the texts Abelard cites in the *Quaestio* of his *Sic et non* that deal with suicide. This reveals how inexorably Abelard's thoughts were drawn to, and indeed could turn in any given context to, the question of self-destruction.

Where Abelard's lament over Jephthah's daughter focused on the girl's preparedness and willingness towards death, by contrast, his lament over Samson in the *Planctus Israel* focuses on Samson's physical degradation and descent into despair,⁴⁴ with his sudden conviction towards self-destruction never fully explored as a conscious choice. Jephthah's daughter goes to her death heroically, marshalling arguments in support of her sacrifice with a rhetorician's skill. Samson's self-destruction is represented more as an opportunistic response to brokenness once his power to act is restored: he justifies his action neither to himself nor anyone else. Dawning as a sudden resolution, Samson's decisive move follows the bustling activity of the two previous lines whose ablative absolute constructions express his rapid restoration to strength and resolve to action: *Renatis iam crinibus, / reparatis uiribus* (lines 26–27; with his hair now regrown, with his strength now recovered . . .). There is no speech involved here, no internal thought process on the part of Samson to which we are made privy, and Abelard offers no meta-narrational theological examination of the rights or wrongs of this action; this is suicide as pure act, an instinctive physical response to suffering.

In the devastation of his body and his incarceration as depicted in the *Planctus Israel*, Samson clearly tropes Abelard as Abelard reveals himself in

43 Abelard cites the same passage from Augustine in his *TC*, where he addresses the question of the permissibility of killing through figures such as Samson: see *TC*, 2.80, ed. Buytaert (1969a).

44 Dronke observes that Abelard was original in the exegetical tradition in reading Samson "as a man who suffered, a failure, a tragic human being [...]. No one before Abelard attempted a compassionate penetration of the character of Samson the man, both despairing and striving to atone." See Peter Dronke, *Poetic Individuality in the Middle Ages: New Departures in Poetry 1000–1150* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 132.

his *Historia*. Samson is blinded by his captors, a mutilation that Abelard refers to three times in four lines: ‘thereafter his enemies deprived him of his sight’ (*hunc hostes postea priuarunt lumine*; line 14), ‘bereft of his eyes’ (*orbatus oculis*; line 15), and ‘now deprived of the sight of his eyes’ (*oculorumque lumine iam priuatus*; line 17). This focus on the deprivation of a body part cannot but suggest Abelard’s castration and his longterm trauma over that loss. Moreover, having been blinded, Samson is next enclosed in a prison—*clausus carcere* (line 17)—just as Abelard was incarcerated in St Médard. As discussed above, it was in recollecting this moment of abject humiliation in his *Historia* that Abelard’s language was most redolent of a potentially suicidal mindset.

Even more tellingly, Samson’s final motivation for suicide seems to reside in his constitution by an enemy audience as an object of cruel humour and humiliation. It is immediately after Samson is ‘led out to play’ (*lusurus inducitur*; line 29)⁴⁵ as sport before the crowds that he chooses ‘to put an end to all his sufferings by death’ (*ut morte doloribus | finem ponat omnibus*; lines 30–31). The bluntness of Abelard’s expression here leaves no room for ambiguity: Samson’s action cannot be defined as a temporary madness. By contrast, it seems rather a moment of clarity and opportunity: ‘From games to weighty matters is drawn a mind at long last roused’ (*A iocis ad seria / fertur mens diu concita*; lines 32–33). Given the chance to end his sufferings by death, Samson chooses to do so. His thought at this juncture does not appear to be on the deliberate destruction of the enemy people that he will accomplish at the same time, his actions are not represented as a heroic sacrifice of himself in order to benefit the greater good, as they are to a much greater extent in the biblical account (Judges 16. 27–30). Indeed, this national aspect of Samson’s death seems to occur only as an afterthought in the *Planctus Israel*, appearing at the end of the final strophe dealing with Samson’s narrative journey, where Abelard relates that Samson’s death ‘mingles the funerals of himself and his enemies’ (*hostium et propria miscet . . . funera*; lines 36–37). Instead, Abelard’s depiction of Samson appears to constitute and lament him specifically as a suicide, one

45 Interestingly, the sole manuscript witness of this lament, Vatican, *Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana*, Reg. Lat. 288, reads ‘lesurus’ here. However this word was amended to ‘lusurus’ by one of the early twentieth-century editors of the *Planctus*, Wilhelm Meyer, on the basis of the biblical exemplar for this scene, Judges 16:25: ‘Ut vocaretur Samson et ante eos luderet; qui adductus de carcere ludebat ante eos.’ See Wilhelm Meyer, ed., ‘Abaelardi Planctus I II IV V VI,’ in *Gesammelte Abhandlungen zur mittellateinischen Rythmik* (New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1970 [1905]), 366–374. Meyer’s emendation has been accepted by all subsequent editors of the *Planctus*.

driven in clear mind to this deliberate act by the magnitude of his physical suffering and public humiliation.

The willed desire for death also recurs in the final lament of the series, the *Planctus David super Saul et Ionatha*. Here David, recalling his deep love for Jonathan, expresses the wish that they could have fought and died together in battle:

- 47. Else, likewise pierced, I would happily have died,
- 48. since what love may do has nothing greater than this;
- 49. and for me to live on after you is to die repeatedly.⁴⁶

This joyful acceptance of and desire for an untimely, even violent, death is not suicidal per se, but certainly taps into the same mindset, a realm of experience where self-destruction is preferable to living on in the world as it is. The juxtaposition of *morerer* (I would die) and *feliciter* (happily) is striking, as Abelard meant it to be.

Ocluded in this lament, however, is the possible suicide of one of the key figures in the lament's address: Saul himself. There are two biblical traditions concerning the death of Saul. One is that Saul, having been wounded, asks an Amalekite soldier to finish him off so that he might avoid capture (2 Samuel 1. 5–10), the other is that having been wounded and unable to find assistance to finalize his death, Saul falls upon his own sword in a suicidal action: *arripuit itaque Saul gladium et inruit super eum* (1 Samuel 31. 3–5). Both versions resonate here: in the earlier of the two instances mentioned in the Bible, Saul specifically asks to be put to death so that he will not be mocked when he is killed by the enemy people (*ne forte veniant incircumcisi isti et interficiant me inludentes mihi*; 1 Sam. 31. 4). This bears strong similarities with both the figure of Samson in the earlier *Planctus Israel* and his impulse towards suicide, and also with Abelard's own statements in the *Historia* of the severe emotional distress caused by his public humiliations.

But although the figure of Saul as suicide was common throughout the medieval period⁴⁷ and so must in some way have informed this lament on his death, Abelard overtly eschews it here, making it clear throughout the *Planctus* that he is adducing the alternative reading whereby Saul was killed by another, not himself. Thus at one point David addresses Saul, noting that his enemy was

46 'Vel confossus pariter, morerer feliciter,/ cum quid amor faciat maius hoc non habeat;/ et me post te uiuere mori sit assidue.' See *Repentant Abelard*, ed. and trans. Ruys (forthcoming).

47 See Murray, *Suicide in the Middle Ages*, vol. 2, 93–94, 194–195, 197–198, and 207.

'permitted to slay' him (*permissus est occidere*, line 30), and he later laments that Saul's throat was 'slit in battle with the sword of an accursed hand' (*sceleste manus gladio iugulatur in prelio*, line 32). Yet this second reading is not entirely unproblematic either, since Saul begs the Amalekite soldier to kill him because although he is physically in great distress, he is yet very much alive (2 Sam. 1. 9: *interfice me quoniam tenent me angustiae et adhuc tota anima in me est*). This may not figure suicide as such,⁴⁸ but it certainly expresses a wish for death to avoid further pain and suffering which is, as has been detailed above, a sentiment that appears throughout Abelard's self-narrative and letters to Heloise, and which Abelard adduces as a motivation for Samson's suicide in the *Planctus Israel*. Given these two traditions of self-destructive behaviours and desires latent in the figure of Saul, it is interesting that Abelard chooses to suppress both of them to varying degrees, instead relocating the longing for death in this lament from Saul to David.

Is this another strategy—as with the repeated conditionals in the suicide passage of the *Carmen*, or the trope of self-imposed exile in his *Historia*—by which Abelard is able both to approach the possibility of self-destruction and simultaneously withdraw from it? Is this why the potentially suicidal emotional states of desolation and despair evoked in this lament are neither attributed to the addressee of the lament, Saul, nor claimed by the speaking voice of David, but rather displaced yet again, to a third party, the people of Israel: "the desolation of the leaders, the despair of the people, fill all things with mourning" (lines 10–12)?⁴⁹ Or can Saul's potential status as suicide be elided here because Abelard had already mined both biblical passages dealing with it in his depiction of the death of Jephthah's daughter, showing her, like Saul in 1 Sam. 31, as seizing the fatal sword, but also like Saul in 2 Sam. 1, as submitting willingly to the final blow of that sword as delivered by another?

As laments, the *Planctus* are all necessarily focused on death, but it is hard to ignore that the memorialization of loved ones and expressions of sorrow over their loss constitute only part of the grieving process here—also notably present in a number of cases is an active desire on the part of the speaker or the protagonist to die, or to be consumed in death. That is, in three out of the six laments, Abelard explores the interior world of a person who chooses, or desires to be able to choose, death, whether out of principle, pain, or love. Of these, perhaps the most complex in terms of suicidal impulses is the final one,

48 Though, notably, 'angustia' was a term associated with suicides in the legal records of later medieval England. See Butler, "Degrees of Culpability," 272.

49 'ducum desolatio,/ uulgi desperatio,/ luctu replent omnia.' See *Repentant Abelard*, ed. and trans. Ruys (forthcoming).

the *Planctus David super Saul et Ionatha* with its multiple intersecting lines of tradition: Saul's suicide as both present and oddly absent, and a desire for death both displaced (from Saul) and confessed (by David). In fact, this lament—and with it Abelard's entire series of laments—ends with a conscious giving up of the self to death as David, in a “voice raw with plaining” (line 67), draws to the end of his song and confesses: “my spirit also fails” (line 68).⁵⁰

Conclusion

The personal later-life writings of Abelard—the texts written for his son, himself, and his once and future beloved, Heloise (the *Carmen ad Astralabium*, *Historia*, and *Planctus*)—express a sensibility that embraces death and explores the world of willed self-destruction. The consideration of suicide as an end to life's pain is most bluntly articulated in the *Carmen* where Abelard's bold assertion “He who kills himself liberates a wretch from suffering” is then set about with caveats that dissipate, but cannot obliterate, its force. This same sense of longing for the right to end one's life pervades others of Abelard's writings. His life narrative and letters to Heloise are replete with linguistic terms that would be strongly identified with the suicidal impulse throughout medieval legal records and theological treatises: despair, desolation, and *dolor* (grief, suffering). Abelard constantly laments his pain and humiliation, longing for an escape, even to the point of considering self-exile outside the boundaries of Christendom—a wish that, within medieval theological understandings, can be read as cloaking a desire for suicidal release. Abelard's most poetic explorations of the possibilities of self-destruction appear in the *Planctus* he wrote for Heloise which offer a range of suicidal fantasies: here is suicide as acquiescence to (and indeed, insistence on) judicial murder, suicide as pure act justified by suffering, and suicide simply as a willed ceasing to be. Nor is this the devout Christian desire for carnal dissolution in order to be one with Christ expressed by Paul in his Letter to the Philippians: *desiderium habens dissolvi et cum Christo esse* (Philippians 1. 23), which was a staple of late medieval *ars moriendi* texts. Rather this is a willed disposition towards non-being, much like Hamlet's prayer “that this too too solid flesh would melt, |Thaw and resolve itself into a dew” or Keats' desire to “Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget.”⁵¹

50 ‘raucis planctu uocibus’; ‘deficit et spiritus.’ See *Repentant Abelard*, ed. and trans. Ruys (forthcoming).

51 William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 1.2.129; John Keats, “Ode to a Nightingale,” in *John Keats, The Complete Poems*, 2nd ed., ed. John Barnard (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1985 [1977]) line 21, 346.

The difficulty with expressing a longing for self-obliteration in the medieval Christian world is also powerfully suggested by the strange anomalies that reside in the *Quaestio* on suicide in Abelard's *Sic et non*. Here a passage of great relevance to Abelard's thoughts on suicide as articulated in his *Carmen*, and which is directly within the range of the material he is excerpting from Augustine's *De civitate Dei* on the subject, is inexplicably omitted. Meanwhile, another passage that is cited shows evidence of having been misremembered, as two distinct texts are conflated into one, combining a cry against madness with a consideration of female suicides in a way that will resonate within Abelard's *Planctus uirginum*.

This exploration of impulses towards self-inflicted death in Abelard's literary corpus can help deepen our understandings of what constituted the 'suicidal' in the Middle Ages. Murray's two wide-ranging volumes (to date) on the topic will have but scratched the surface if attempted or completed act alone is the criterion by which a suicide is to be judged. On the contrary, much evidence could no doubt be found of deep psychic pain and desire for death in medieval epistolary, lyric, and life narrative texts. We should explore not just act, but, where we can, the entire emotional contexts under which medieval people lived and laboured. After all, as Abelard himself would have said: it is the intention that counts, not the deed. On the other hand, the unspeakability of such desires, which themselves solicit constant undercutting and masking in expression will make such texts and such intentions all the more difficult to identify and discuss. In addition, and as part of a larger debate over periodicity not to be taken up here, we can also see that the 'modernity' of Hamlet's soliloquies exploring self-destruction cannot be taken as indicative of a new sensibility of the self arising only in the early modern period.⁵² If we look, we can find expressions of deep emotional disturbance and longing for the release of death, even in the great medieval 'Ages of Faith'.⁵³ For now we can take our departure with the complaint of Abelard to Heloise, at once thrumming with pain and querulous of Christian antidotes: "I cannot see why you should prefer me to live on in great misery rather than be happier in death."⁵⁴

52 See David Aers, "A Whisper in the Ear of Early Modernists; or, Reflections on Literary Critics Writing the 'History of the Subject,'" in *Culture and History, 1350–1600: Essays on English Communities, Identities and Writing*, ed. David Aers (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), 177–202; and Georges Minois, *History of Suicide: Voluntary Death in Western Culture*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 87.

53 On this, see further Sabina Flanagan, *Doubt in the Age of Faith: Uncertainty in the Long Twelfth Century* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008).

54 *Ep.*, 5, trans. Radice (1974), 78: 'Cur me miserrime vivere malis quam felicius mori, non video.' See also Muckle, "The Personal Letters," 86.

PART FOUR

Poetics and Poetry



Peter Abelard's *Planctus 'Dolorum solatium'*: A New Song for David

Eileen F. Kearney

It is almost a century now since Haskins' groundbreaking study of the twelfth century as a great renaissance.¹ In its early decades, the threads of this intellectual and spiritual transformation would converge in northern France where teachers such as Anselm of Bec, Anselm of Laon, William of Champeaux and Hugh at Saint Victor, the teachers at Chartres and, of course, Peter Abelard, renewed, reformed, and gave birth to what must have seemed like a new world. One aspect of that remarkable time is what David Knowles described as a "wide and sympathetic humanism" from within which writers "show themselves possessed of a rare delicacy of perception and warmth of feeling."² This was especially so when writers described the experience of love and friendship with a self-awareness that was intimate, soul searching, and erudite, particularly with regard to the loss of a beloved.³

One might not immediately think of Peter Abelard's life or work as revealing such a "rare delicacy of perception and warmth of feeling." Yet, for some time now, scholars have recognized just this kind of insight and sentiment in the *Historia calamitatum* and its related correspondence as well as in the six *planctus* believed to be composed for Heloise at about the same time, i.e.

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- 1 I am grateful to the Medieval Academy of America for a travel grant that enabled me to present an earlier version of this paper at the 2011 Medieval Conference held in Leeds. I also wish to thank my colleagues, Troy Martin (professor of biblical studies at St Xavier University) and Lucille Thibodeau (professor of English at Rivier University) for our discussions, which so enhanced the development of my thinking on Abelard's *planctus*, "*Dolorum solatium*." C. H. Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927).
 - 2 David Knowles, "The Humanism of the Twelfth Century," in *The Historian and Character and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 16–30, here 17 and 19. Also, see Helen Waddell, "Humanism in the First Half of the Twelfth Century," in *The Wandering Scholars* (London: Constable, 1927), 104–123.
 - 3 Note, for example, the increasing number of treatises on friendship as well as the rise of the monastic *planctus*. See Anselm Hoste, "Aelred of Rivaux and the Monastic Planctus," *Cîteaux* 18 (1967), 385–398; and Brian Patrick McGuire, "Monks and Tears, A Twelfth-Century Change," in *The Difficult Saint, Bernard of Clairvaux and His Tradition*, 126 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1991), 13–151.

during the last decade of his life.⁴ In particular, Abelard's poems of lament offer a remarkable glimpse of Abelard as one so moved by love and loss that his reflections cut to the chase, as it were, and he poignantly describes the suffering of separation rendered by death from a deeply humanistic perspective.

But Abelard's planctus are noteworthy in other ways as well. They are, for example, among the first medieval Latin poems which made use of biblical texts for their subject matter.⁵ Abelard could have gleaned from a rich, diverse, and complex literary tradition of lament which included biblical, classical, and patristic writings that both described and ritualized mourning.⁶ Instead, he chose to draw from a narrative or figure of the Hebrew Scriptures as the subject matter for each of the six planctus: Dinah's Lament for herself (Genesis 34), Jacob's Lament for his Sons (Genesis 35, 37, 42 and 43), the Lament of the Virgins of Israel for Jephtha's Daughter (Judges 11.29–40), Israel's Lament for Samson (Judges 13–16), and two of David's Laments, one for Abner (2 Samuel 3) and another for Saul and Jonathan (2 Samuel 1.17–27).

In Abelard's hands, the biblical record of what was a singular and personal experience for Dinah, or Jacob, or David, for example, becomes universal as their sorrows embody the experience of all who grieve and mourn.⁷ As a result, the gap that exists in time between the ancient and the present, between a

4 Nancy Jones, "By Women's Tears Redeemed: Female Lament in St Augustine's *Confessions* and the Correspondence of Abelard and Heloise," in *Sex and Gender in Medieval and Renaissance Texts, the Latin Tradition*, ed. Barbara K. Gold, Paul Allen Miller, and Charles Platter (New York: SUNY Press, 1979), 15–39.

5 One of the earliest is the lament of Rachel by Notker (840–912), *Quid tu, virgo*. Consult the thorough listing of medieval planctus by Janthia Yearley, "A Bibliography of Planctus in Latin, Provençal, French, German, English, Italian, Catalan and Galician-Portuguese from the Time of Bede to the Early Fifteenth Century," *Journal of the Plainsong and Mediaeval Music Society* 4 (1981), 12–52.

6 For example, a brief overview of several classical and patristic sources such as Catullus, Cicero, Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine, and Gregory of Nyssa is the context for reflection in Anselm Hoste, "Aelred's Lament and the Monastic Planctus," *Cîteaux* 18 (1967), 385–398. With specific reference to Abelard, several interesting essays can be noted: for textual analysis, for example, see Peter Dronke with Margaret Alexiou, "The Lament of Jephtha's Daughter: Themes, Traditions, Originality," *Studi Medievali* 12 (1971), 819–863; or Lucille Claire Thibodeau, "Peter Abelard's 'Planctus Dinae': A Rereading of the Story of Dinah," in *The Relation of Peter Abelard's 'Planctus Dinae' to Biblical Sources and Exegetic Tradition: A Historical and Textual Study*, PhD diss. (Harvard University, 1990), 150–244. On a more comparative note see the study of Augustine, Abelard, and Godfrey of St Victor in Nancy van Deusen, "The Lament and Augustine: Visions of Disintegration and Transformation," in *Dreams and Visions: An Interdisciplinary Enquiry*, ed. Nancy van Deusen (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 31–46.

7 With reference to biblical influence, consult Gilbert Dahan, "Samson et Dalila: Le chapitre 16 des Juges dans l'exégèse chrétienne du XII et XIII^e siècles," *Graphè* 13 (2004), 97–118; and Gilbert Dahan, "La Matière biblique dans le *Planctus* de Dina de Pierre Abélard," in *Hortus*

voice in a distant past and the new voice of the present is overcome by Abelard in the text—his text—as it encapsulates anew the desolation of that long ago loss. One interesting outcome of this distance in time is that the subject who mourns in each of these laments is a step removed from Abelard's own person. As poet, then, Abelard creates and maintains a certain detachment between himself and the subject of the planctus. Despite this fact, however, the question of parallels between what is articulated in Abelard's poems and his personal life is often raised and, certainly, similarities between the two can be observed. Nonetheless, the planctus are not designed to be autobiographical *per se* and rather than serving simply as a mirror of personal experience, they illustrate the power of Abelard's imagination and what Von den Steinen describes as Abelard's capacity to project himself into the biblical subject and then to transcend that moment in time.⁸

Another dimension of Abelard's creative talent with reference to his planctus has been brought to the foreground by the sustained contemporary interest in Abelard as poet and musician. Indeed, each of Abelard's planctus is accompanied by musical notation and several scholars have considered these poems with regard to either the poetic form of the text itself and/or its music.⁹ But whether discussing poetic rhythms, musical notation, or even the relation of Abelard's planctus to other twelfth century developments in these areas, in the planctus we can trace Abelard's *ingenium* in one of its most sensitive and creative expressions as he encapsulates anew the desolation and finality of the loss rendered by death.¹⁰

traporum, Florilegium in honorem Gunillae Iverson, A Festschrift in Honour of Professor Gunilla Iversen on the Occasion of her Retirement as Chair of Latin at Stockholm University, ed. Alexander Andrée and Erika Kihlman, *Studia Latina Stockholmiensia* 54 (Stockholm: Stockholms Universitet, 2008), 255–267.

- 8 Wolfram von den Steinen, "Les sujets d'inspiration chez les poètes latins au XII^e siècle, II, Abélard et le subjectivisme," *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 9 (1966), 333–383, on Abelard see 333–373.
- 9 Most helpful for this study include Lorenz Weinrich, "Peter Abelard as Musician—I," *The Musical Quarterly* 55 (1969), 295–312; and Lorenz Weinrich, "The Neumes of the Manuscripts of Planctus IV," *The Musical Quarterly* 55 (1960), 295–312. However, also note John Stevens, "Samson dux fortissime: An International Latin Song," *Plainson and Medieval Music* 1 (1992), 1–40; Michel Huglo, "Abelard, poète et musicien," *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 22 (1979), 349–361; Armand Machaby, "Les planctus d'Abélard, Remarques sur le rythme musical du XII^e siècle," *Romania* 82 (1961), 71–95; and Giuseppe Vecchi, "Sequenza e lai, A propositio di un ritmo di Abelardo," *Studi Medievali* NS (1943–1950), 89–106.
- 10 Several recent essays consider the *planctus* from these perspectives. For example, see Ann Buckley, "Abelard's *Planctus* and the Old French *lais*: Melodic Style and Formal Structure," in *The Poetic and Musical Legacy of Heloise and Abelard: An Anthology of Essays by Various Authors*, ed. Marc Stewart and David Wulstan (Ottawa, Canada and Westhumble, Surrey:

My interest at this time is to examine only one of Abelard's poems of lament, the *Planctus David super Saul et Ionatha* and to trace Abelard's skillful creation of a new voice for David that brings a meaningful and vital renewal to all levels of this ancient song. Since the 1960's, the *Planctus David* has been examined by several scholars from a variety of perspectives, whether editing the text,¹¹ discussing its poetic artistry or its focus on the significance of human experience,¹² or even, more recently, considering his *Planctus David* in relation to gender issues.¹³ Understandably, commentators are drawn to the way Abelard's David grieves for Jonathan and in some measure, each has discussed the relationship of Abelard's *Planctus David* to its biblical sources in this regard. But, to date, there is no evaluation of the content of the planctus as a whole, nor is there any thorough analysis of its relationship to the biblical lament. Yet it is only when the complete poem is considered in this fuller context that we can appreciate Abelard's skill as he moves both within and beyond the parameters of the biblical lament, such as we can see when he changes a word, shifts the focus, or introduces an entirely new and unexpected idea.

Thus, as we trace Abelard's own process of interpretation and creation, there are two major foci I will investigate at this time: first, the biblical text in its own right and then, Abelard's rendering of that source. While this quest is fundamentally exegetical, several distinctions need to be kept in mind. First

Institute of Medieval Music and The Plainsong and Medieval Music Society, 2003), 49–59; or Annelies Wouters, “‘*Abner fidelissime*’: Abelard's Version of a Biblical Lament,” in *The Poetic and Musical Legacy of Heloise and Abelard: An Anthology of Essays by Various Authors*, ed. Marc Stewart and David Wulfstan (Ottawa, Canada and Westhumble, Surrey: Institute of Medieval Music and The Plainsong and Medieval Music Society, 2003), 60–66. Note as well both Nicholas Bell, “Les planctus d'Abélard et la tradition tardive du planctus,” in *Pierre Abélard: Colloque international de Nantes*, ed. Jean Jolivet and Henri Habrias (Rennes: Presses Universitaire de Rennes, 2003), 261–266; and Ann Buckley, “Abelard's *Planctus virginum Israel super filia lepte Galadite* and *Li Lais des puceles*,” in *Études de la langue et de littérature médiévale offerts à Peter T Ricketts à l'occasion de son 70ème anniversaire*, ed. Dominique Billy and Ann Buckley (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 545–569. Of course, all draw from the earlier study, Peter Dronke, “Planctus and Satire,” in *Poetic Individuality in the Middle Ages: New Departures in Poetry 1000–1150* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 114–149.

- 11 Lorenz Weinrich, “‘*Dolorum solatium*’ Text und Musik von Abaelards Planctus David,” *Mittelateinisches Jahrbuch* 5 (1969), 59–78, here 70–72. I cite this edition throughout and include the complete text of the *Planctus* in the Appendix.
- 12 Von den Steinen, “Les sujets d'inspiration,” 333–373.
- 13 Juanita Feros Ruys, “*Planctus magis quam cantici*: The Generic Significance of Abelard's Planctus,” *Plainsong and Medieval Music* 11 (2002), 37–44; also note, Ruys, “‘*Ut Sexu sic animo*.’”

of all, Abelard's interpretation of David's lament drawn from 2 Samuel 1.17–27 does not fall under the rubric of a formal commentary or exposition, although he certainly demonstrates sensitivity to the literal and historical meaning of the biblical lament itself. His sense of a literal, historical reading is measured, of course, by a twelfth-century understanding of history both in terms of the events themselves, and the composition of the biblical record.

Along the same lines, when we interpret what we believe Abelard was doing as he renders the sacred text within his planctus, there is an even more fundamental issue to remember. All too often, one is tempted to assume that Abelard had a 'text' in hand. But, within the framework of the twelfth century's manuscripts and textual traditions, what does this actually mean?¹⁴ It is quite possible, perhaps even probable, that in this instance, as Abelard composed his planctus, he drew upon the biblical narratives from memory. This would allow Abelard a more open, less formal exegesis than one might otherwise expect.

In addition, while keeping both of these hermeneutical issues in mind, one should also recognize how Abelard's concern for the historical context of David's mourning is caught up in a tension between fidelity to the biblical text and Abelard's need to express the human experience of utter desolation that goes beyond the Word or its implications. Inspired by the mourning of a hero from ages past, Abelard brings David's grieving into his present for all who face love, loss, and personal transformation wrought by death. Subsequently, one might expect what some identify as a pastoral sensitivity or a moral appropriation of the text. And, certainly, this can be found in Abelard's planctus. In fact, however, something else is also at work here. When Abelard draws on a Word he held as sacred, he uses it only as a beginning, as if it were a stepping stone, in his own search for meaning. Actually, Abelard creates a new text, such that his poem has a life of its own beyond the Word. In the *Planctus David*, then, the art of interpretation becomes an act of creation. In the following, as we explore this shift from interpretation to creation, we begin the analysis of Abelard's *Planctus David super Saul et Ionatha* with a prelude that provides a more thorough reading of 1 Samuel 1.17–2.27 than can currently be found in Abelardian research.

14 It is just these issues that are addressed in a brief note following the edition and commentary in Wouters, "Abner fidelissime," 66. Also, see the study of the development of the *Glossa ordinaria* during the twelfth century in Lesley Smith, *The Glossa Ordinaria: The Making of a Medieval Bible Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

When David Mourns Saul and Jonathan—The Biblical Lament

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| 17 | Moreover David lamented with
this lamentation
over Saul and Jonathan his
son . . . and said: | <i>Planxit autem Dauid planctum huiuscemodi
super Saul et super Jonathan filius eius . . . et
ait:</i> |
| 19 | [Your] glory, Israel, is slain upon
your high places!
How are the brave/courageous
fallen! | <i>Inclyti, Israel, super montes tuos interfecti
sunt!
Quomodo ceciderunt fortes!</i> |
| 20 | Tell it not in Gath,
announce it not in the streets of
Ashkelon;
lest perhaps the daughters of the
Philistines rejoice,
lest the daughters of the
uncircumcised exult. | <i>Nolite annuntiare in Geth,
neque annuntietis incompitis Ascalonis:

ne forte laetentur filiae Philistiūm,

ne exultent filiae incircumcisorum.</i> |
| 21 | Mountains of Gilboa,
let there be no dew or rain upon
you,
nor the fields of first- fruits!
For there the shield of the mighty
was defiled,
the shield of Saul, as if not
anointed with oil. | <i>Montes Gelboe,
nec ros, nec pluuiā ueniant super uos,

neque sint agri primitiarum!
Quia ibi abiectus est clypeus fortium,

clypeus Saul, quasi non esset unctus oleo.</i> |
| 22 | From the blood of the slain,
from the fat of the mighty,
the bow of Jonathan turned not
back,
and the sword of Saul returned
not empty. | <i>A sanguine interfectorum,
ab adipe fortium,
sagitta Ionathae nunquam rediit retrorsum,

et gladius Saul non est reuersus inanis.</i> |
| 23 | Saul and Jonathan, beloved and
lovely!
In their life as in death they were
not divided;
swifter than eagles, stronger than
lions. | <i>Saul et Ionathas amabiles, et decori!

In uita sua, in morte quoque non sunt diuisi:

aquilis uelociores, leonibus fortiores.</i> |
| 24 | Daughters of Israel, weep over
Saul,
who clothed you elegantly in
scarlet, | <i>Filiae Israel, super Saul flete,

qui uestiebat uos coccino in deliciis,</i> |

- | | | |
|----|--|--|
| | who put ornaments of gold upon
your apparel. | <i>qui praebebat ornamenta aurea cultui
uestro.</i> |
| 25 | How are the brave fallen in the
midst of battle! | <i>Quomodo ceciderunt fortes in praelio!</i> |
| | Jonathan is slain upon your high
places. | <i>Jonathas in excelsis tuis occisus est.</i> |
| 26 | I am distressed for you, my
brother Jonathan;
very pleasant, and loving
surpassing the love of women.
Just as a mother loves her only son,
so did I love you. | <i>Doleo super te, frater mi Ionatha,

decore nimis, et amabilis
super amorem mulierum.
Sicut mater unicum amat filium suum,
ita ego te diligebam.</i> |
| 27 | How are the powerful fallen,
and the weapons of war
destroyed! ¹⁵ | <i>Quomodo ceciderunt robusti,
et perierunt arma bellica!</i> |

David's lament over the deaths of Saul and Jonathan follows narratives that describe not only his relationship to both the King and his son but also the increasing enmity between David and Saul whose feelings toward David shift from affection and admiration to jealousy and hatred as David excels in battle and receives the adulation of the people. Ultimately, Saul will make several failed attempts on David's life.¹⁶

In sharp contrast, Jonathan's ties with David are increasingly strengthened by the bonds of love, initiated by ritualized expressions of friendship and a love explicitly declared within solemn promises and a pledge of fidelity:

An so it was when [David] had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was united/ joined together with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved David as his own soul . . . Moreover, Jonathan made an alliance with David, because he loved him as his own soul.¹⁷

15 2 Samuel 1:17–1:27. All citations of the Vulgate in this study are from the *Biblia sacra iuxta Vulgata Clementinam*, 7th ed. (Madrid: Biblioteca de Auctores Christianos, 1977 [1502]). The English version is from *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

16 In addition to the biblical narratives in 1 Samuel, see the articles David M. Howard, "David," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), vol. 2, 41–49; Diana Edelman, "Jonathan," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), vol. 3, 944–946; and Diana Edelman, "Saul," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), vol. 5, 889–998.

17 1 Samuel 18:1–18:3: 'Et factus est cum complisset loqui ad Saul; anima Ionathae conglutinate est animae David, et dilexit eum Jonathas quasi animam suam [. . .] Inierunt

Immediately following, Jonathan, the son of Saul, symbolically yields his right to the throne to David: "And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his armor and even his sword and his bow and his girdle" (1 Samuel 18.4). All of these gestures initiated by Jonathan have led modern commentators to understand that between Jonathan and David, love is essentially tied into the political and religious history or destiny in which David is God's chosen successor to Saul. As commentators indicate, the Hebrew term for love here is quite specific: *ʾāhēb*.¹⁸ Furthermore, each time it is used in reference to Jonathan and David's relationship, it is Jonathan who takes the initiative, and though friends, David never forgets that Jonathan is his prince and David is servant. Later, David even says to Jonathan: "Therefore, be merciful to your servant, for you have brought me, your servant, into an alliance with you before the Lord."¹⁹

Throughout the course of the struggles between Saul and David, Jonathan protects David from his father's wrath and continues to pledge fidelity to David as Israel's future king. Even when they meet for the last time, Jonathan and David renew this solemn promise (1 Samuel 23.17–18). That the love between Jonathan and David is always expressed in terms that indicate both political alliance and religious fidelity can and should not be overlooked and its implications, explicitly noted throughout 1 Samuel, are integral to the loss David experiences when Jonathan dies.

When David learns that both Saul and Jonathan have been slain in the battle with the Philistines on Mount Gilboa, his grief is palpable. Both David and his company mourn, weep, rend their garments and fast until evening, not only for the King and his sons but also for all in Israel who have fallen under the sword of the Philistines (2 Samuel 1.11–12). The formal lament, which is only nine verses, immediately follows these rituals of mourning and eulogizes both Saul and Jonathan. David first calls Israel to mourning, for "[Your] glory, Israel,

autem David et Ionathas foedus; diligebat enim eum quasi animam suam.' This is repeated throughout the narratives. For example, see 1 Samuel 20:17: "Whatever you say, I [Jonathan] I will do for you [David]. And Jonathan made David swear again by his love for him; for he loved him as he loved his own soul." See also, 1 Samuel 19:1: "But Jonathan, Saul's son, delighted much in David."

- 18 Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, "Love, Old Testament," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), vol. 4, 376–381; and J. A. Thompson, "The Significance of the Verb LOVE in the David-Jonathan Narratives of 1 Samuel," *Vetus Testamentum* 24, no. 3 (1974), 334–338. The Vulgate consistently uses *diligo* in the passages cited.
- 19 1 Samuel 20:8: 'Fac ergo misericordiam in seruum tuum; quia foedus Domini me famulum tuum tecum inire fecisti.' The significance of Jonathan's place and role in the history of David's rise to power is recognized in the essay Patricia K. Tull, "Jonathan's Gift of Friendship," *Interpretation* 58, no. 2 (2004), 130–143.

is slain upon your high places! How are the brave/courageous fallen!" (v. 19), and then curses the land itself, the place of their demise: "Let there be no dew or rain upon you" (v. 21). And, despite all that Saul had done to bring him down, David mourns his death. He overlooks how father and son were often at odds with each other and speaks as if they had been close companions. In this way, David mourns an idealized pair, both "beloved and lovely, in their life as in death they were not divided" (v. 23), and he remembers them not for their weaknesses or flaws but for their strength, "swifter than eagles, stronger than lions" (v. 23). Both are forever lost to Israel.

David subsequently calls upon the daughters of Israel to mourn the king, "who clothed you elegantly in scarlet, who put ornaments of gold upon your apparel" (v. 24) and only at the close of his lament does he turn his attention to the loss of Jonathan. The refrain that both opens and closes the poem ("how are the brave/courageous fallen", vv. 19, 27) also leads into David's lament for Jonathan (v. 25) and serves to integrate his private grief with public mourning. They were as brothers and more, ritually united before the Lord God. The ties that bind them are, in fact, the very source of David's anguish. As a result, this suffering is like no other because David's grief is measured not simply by the loss of a prince in Israel and political ally but also by a profound and complex love between the king's son and the king's servant. Consequently, the death of Jonathan touches the very core of David's being and he laments from within these deep bonds:

I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan;
very pleasant and loving
surpassing the love of women. (v. 26)

As many commentators observe, verse 26 is the only time personal pronouns are used in the poem. It is also the only time that David alludes to both their friendship and how Jonathan's death has affected him personally.

Some contemporary writers find erotic, homosexual implications in this passage. Yet any careful literary, historical analysis of the text shows this to be inappropriate on several counts. For example, as already noted, the choice of the verb 'to love' used here by the biblical writer is a precise term intending to express the relationship between Jonathan and David within political and religious connotations. Also, in her essay on Jonathan's love for David, Patricia Tull briefly, but carefully, addresses the issue, recognizing how such a reading violates both the context and the tradition of the lament.²⁰

20 Both Thompson, "The Significance of the Verb LOVE," and Tull, "Jonathan's Gift," deal with the issue in relation to the biblical text and tradition itself.

However, there is another point to bring forward here that bears on interpreting the nature of the love between Jonathan and David. Several editions of the Vulgate include an additional sentence in the biblical text itself, adding the following to verse 26: "Just as a mother loves her only son, so did I love you."²¹ While this appears only in some editions of the Vulgate, its inclusion would clearly eliminate any possibility of reading the verse with erotic implications. Because the additional passage appears in several medieval copies of both the *Vulgate* and the *Glossa ordinaria*, one might justly assume Abelard knew the fuller version of this Scripture.

But regardless of the textual variant, the verse expresses the most poignant and personal aspect of David's mourning and brings the lament to a close. And, although brief, the biblical lament responded to the violent and public death of a king and a prince in battle as well as this personal loss of a friend and political ally for David. It runs a gamut of emotions with a call to the people, the cursing of Mount Gilboa, praise for the victims, an appeal to the maidens to remember Saul's graciousness to them, and finally, however succinct, this song of mourning turns to David's personal suffering over the loss of Jonathan as the lament closes, repeating the refrain, "How are the powerful fallen" (v. 27).

Abelard's *Planctus* for David—a New Song

Abelard's *Planctus David super Saul et Ionatha* certainly follows the biblical lament in its overall structure, noting the events first, then bringing the land and the women into mourning, and, finally, of course, grieving for Saul and Jonathan.²² In addition, unlike any other Abelardian *planctus*, the biblical source of the *Planctus David* is itself a lyrical ode, a literary model of lament long recognized and admired in the Judeo-Christian tradition. However, it is immediately apparent that Abelard's *Planctus* is far more than an alternate

21 Note that while Abelard might have been aware of this additional passage, the same cannot be said for modern readers unfamiliar with the textual variant. This is especially so since it does not appear in either the Hebrew Bible or contemporary English translations of the Bible.

22 All citations from the *Planctus* are in italics; the division of the *Planctus*, with line numbering follows the edition available in Lorenz Weinrich, (1969), 59–78, here 70–72. The text, its manuscript tradition, and English translation are also presented in a melodic study of the *Planctus David* in Lorenz Weinrich, "Peter Abelard as Musician—II," *The Musical Quarterly* 55, no. 4 (1969), 464–486.

version or a retelling of that moment in time.²³ Indeed, Abelard enhances the very nature of David's sorrow by drawing attention to the fuller biblical narratives that lead to the deaths of Saul and Jonathan with both explicit and implicit allusions to 1 Samuel 14–31 as well as to the initial verses of 2 Samuel 1 that precede the biblical lament itself. As Abelard creates a new song for David, this interplay between the biblical sources and what Abelard does as he both reforms and recreates that Word marks the entire *Planctus*.

The result is that Abelard's *Planctus David* is more complex, revealing multiple dimensions of David's loss and thus preparing the audience for the intense outpouring of grief for Jonathan that is, perhaps, the most striking distinction between Abelard's poem and its biblical source. For example, when Abelard's David mourns, Abelard wraps the poem in the music of David's lyre. Both the opening and closing lines of the *Planctus David* express how this singing of the strings brought comfort to David in his grief (I, 1–6; IV, 105–110). As we have seen in the biblical lament, a brief refrain serves the same function. But Abelard also moves forward, and as David Traill notes, by introducing the *Planctus* this way, Abelard follows a practice often found in eleventh century lyrics.²⁴

Nonetheless, although the formulaic phrasing itself is not innovative, Abelard's appropriation is especially fortuitous and a wonderful touch. Abelard introduces David here in his own historical context, as poet and musician, one who often played the lyre, but now, the David who had come to the court to comfort and calm a distraught king with music plays the lyre for his own consolation.²⁵ Thus, Abelard presents David in a way that both enhances his humanity and reminds his audience that this man who mourns is Israel's future King and author of the psalms. Throughout this study of the *Planctus David*, we will continue to follow Abelard's own lead as he weaves the historical into his own perceptions, keeping in mind its biblical origins and identifying the moments when Abelard deftly plays with that source, as he chooses to add or omit, to emphasize or explore the grief of Israel's David.

23 That the biblical text is only the starting point for Abelard is most obvious in its expansion from ten verses to one hundred and ten lines in the *Planctus*.

24 David A. Traill, "Parce continuis—A New Text and Interpretative Notes," *Mittelaltarisches Jahrbuch* 21 (1986), 114–124, here 123.

25 1 Samuel 18:10: "And on the morrow an evil spirit from God rushed upon Saul, and he raved within his house, while David was playing the lyre, as he did day by day." Note also 1 Samuel 16:23 and 19:9. In fact, David was first brought into the court of Saul as a harpist. See 1 Samuel 16:14–16:23.

When Abelard's David Mourns

Just as in the biblical lament, Abelard's David calls for mourning that is universal. The people of Israel mourn their defeat by the Philistines as well as the loss of their king and his sons:²⁶

A great massacre/slaughter of people
the death of a king and a son,
the enemy victorious . . .
while Judea torments itself
with lamentations (I, 7–9; II, 17–18)

Abelard's sensitivity to the scope of this devastation is noteworthy for Israel's tragedy touches all, not just the royal circle.

Abelard adds another interesting but, this time, provocative note when he compares the rising power of the enemy with the weakening of Israel. This was not the first time Israel was defeated by the Philistines in battle, of course, and Abelard might well be remembering accounts of earlier struggles (1 Samuel 4–5) or the defiance of Goliath (1 Samuel 17). But now, where the biblical account of Israel's loss to the Philistines merely mentions that the enemy "... sent messengers throughout the land of the Philistines to carry the good news to their idols and their people" (1 Samuel 31.9), Abelard probes more deeply, entering the mind of Israel's adversary as it were, and even gives the enemy its own voice. The Philistines or infidels (*infidelis populus*, II, 20) insult the people of faith and Abelard's David repeats their scornful reproach: "Behold, their god of whom they babble/chatter has betrayed them, their own god" (II, 26–28). Abelard even allows the enemy to continue, emphasizing the Philistines' intense disdain for Israel, for its King, and especially for its God:²⁷

The one whom [their god] first gave to them,
the defeated king lies dead.
Such is the election
of their own god,

26 Although three of Saul's sons are killed in the battle, both the biblical lament and Abelard's *Planctus* speak only of Jonathan. See both 1 Samuel 31:2 and 1 Chronicles 10:2.

27 When the 'infidels' use the term 'god,' whether they speak of their own or of Israel's deity, I do not use the upper case.

such the consecration
by a great one/seer.²⁸ (II, 31–36)

It is so like Abelard to seek the inner thoughts and intentions of others; here, even the enemy, in what must seem a sacrilegious outburst, derides the faith of Israel in a god who would so betray them, in a god whose chosen one (*electus*)—whose anointed (*consecratio*)—is abandoned to the enemy. Abelard's *Planctus David* thus touches on what is indeed a bitter truth for Israel, the people of faith whose world is turned upside down when victory is won by “the many gods” (II, 30). So bereaved of God's saving presence, David's sorrows and woes are the sorrows and woes of all in the midst of unspeakable defeat on every level.

However, as engaging as these initial verses of the *Planctus David* may be, they only foreshadow the anguish yet to come. In Parts III and IV of the *planctus* that follow, Abelard's emphasis shifts from the broader context of the battle and what is almost a victory song for the Philistines to the aftermath of Israel's defeat on Mount Gilboa.

Lamenting the Deaths of Saul and Jonathan

Abelard's David continues his lament but now he speaks of the tragic deaths of Saul and Jonathan “. . . where the anointed of the Lord and the glory of Israel were destroyed by miserable death with their people” (IV, 57–60). It is indeed a time for mourning and, understandably, once his focus is on the loss of his King and his friend, grief intensifies and anguish becomes more personal. As the biblical poem describes Saul and Jonathan in idealized terms—‘beloved, lovely, swifter than eagles,’ etc., so too, Abelard's David: “Saul bravest of kings, Jonathan in virtue unsurpassed” (III, 37–38). Then, just as the daughters of Israel are called to mourning by the biblical David, Abelard's David also invites the women of Sion to lament; only here the red robes of glory and gold adornment are replaced by the somber purple of mourning: “Daughters of Sion, take up a lament over Saul whose generous gifts adorned you in purple” (IV, 61–64).

When Abelard's David refers to the land, he enhances the biblical scenario on Mount Gilboa by a repetition of the emotive “woe to you” and by a more graphic description of an earth steeped with blood:

28 The *uatis magni* of the *Planctus* is often translated as ‘prophet’; but I think Abelard deliberately avoids the Latin *propheta* here (his term generally reserved for the Hebrew prophets) and chooses instead *vates/vatis* to indicate a seer.

Woe, woe to you, the soil
 steeped/soaked with royal blood,
 and where an unholy hand
 laid you low, my Jonathan! (IV, 53–56)

With the same evocative detail, Abelard's David describes the actual deaths of Saul and Jonathan, enhancing the irony of the present moment with an elusive reference to the time when Jonathan had been victorious over the Philistines (1 Samuel 14):

the one who could not conquer you
 has been allowed to slay you.
 As if [Saul] had not been consecrated
 to the Lord with oil,
 in battle [his] throat cut
 by a sword in a wicked hand. (III, 39–44)

The imagery stuns. For Saul, the oils of anointing are replaced by his own blood, "... in battle [his] throat cut."²⁹ Jonathan too, also slain on that Mount steeped in blood, lies in the very place where "an unholy hand laid you low, my Jonathan" (IV, 55–56).

The violence of their deaths seems overwhelming and in the initial outpouring of distress for the King and his son, Abelard's David is almost distracted, shifting back and forth as he refers to both father and son. But, in the end, there is a marked difference between the nature of David's lament for Saul and the expressions of profound grief for Jonathan. When Abelard's David specifically laments Saul, for example, he speaks of him only as Israel's King. He does not address Saul as the father of his friend, Jonathan, nor even as his father-in-law, but only as God's elect, the one first chosen by God to rule Israel.³⁰ In the *Planctus David*, this is seen where the early allusion to Saul as the Lord's anointed is soon followed by noting his consecration (III, 41–42 and IV, 57).

29 Here, Abelard's *Planctus* draws upon verse 21 of the biblical lament, which as modern editors indicate is problematic, since it speaks of anointing in reference to Saul's shield rather than the King himself ('Quia ibi abiectus est clypeus fortium, clypeus Saul, quasi non esset unctus oleo'). However, Abelard's David speaks of anointing only in reference to Saul.

30 1 Samuel 18:20–18:27. David is married to Michal, Saul's daughter, who also protects David from Saul's vengeance. Also note 1 Samuel 19:11–19:17.

Actually, although only a few lines of the *Planctus David* specifically address Saul's death, all of these draw upon the way the biblical David consistently treated Saul, as the Lord's anointed, with great respect. The biblical narratives even recall that David was once loved by Saul, and like Saul, he, too, is the anointed of the Lord.³¹ Twice, as Saul pursues him, David spares his life, and does so because of his consecration.³² And when he learns that the Amalekite who brought the news of Saul's death is also the one who took the king's life, David orders his death precisely because he killed the Lord's anointed:

How is it you were not afraid to put forth your hand to destroy the Lord's anointed? [...] Your blood be upon your head; for your own mouth has testified against you, saying, 'I have slain the Lord's anointed' (2 Samuel 1.14, 16).³³

It is interesting that in describing the deaths of Saul and Jonathan, Abelard relies only on the biblical account found in 2 Samuel 1.1–16, which directly precedes the lament itself. This version differs considerably from the parallel accounts of 1 Samuel 31 and 1 Chronicles 10. Both accounts include gruesome details of Saul's demise. The wounded Saul takes his own life and his body is desecrated: Saul is beheaded, stripped of his armor, and his body, fastened to the wall of Bethshan, is later retrieved and burned by the valiant men of Jabesh-Gilead. And, in 1 Chronicles, the slaying of Saul is directly attributed to the Lord.³⁴

31 Early in the narratives of 1 Samuel, David was anointed by Samuel as king elect before he enters Saul's service, see 1 Samuel 16:1–16:14 and 16:21–16:23. After the death of Saul, David is instructed by God to go to Hebron where he is officially anointed King of Judah, in 2 Samuel 2:7. It is only later that all the tribes of Israel call upon David to be their leader and David is then anointed King of all Israel in God's presence, see 2 Samuel 5:1–5:5.

32 1 Samuel 24:2–24:23 and 1 Samuel 26:1–26:25.

33 My translation. At the end of the *Planctus*, Abelard's David will explicitly turn to just this passage (*Planctus* 5, lines 97–104). Note as well that Abelard refers to the same incident in his Romans commentary: "David not only did not kill his greatest enemy, Saul, when the Lord put him into his hand, but even lamented deeply when [Saul] was killed and immediately punished with death the one who professed to be his killer," in *Comm. Rom.*, 3.7.13, ed. Buytaert (1969b), 200; *Comm. Rom.*, trans. Cartwright (2012), 255.

34 1 Chronicles 10:13–10:14 explicitly states that Saul's death is punishment for his unfaithfulness, a death delt by the Lord: "So Saul died for his unfaithfulness; he was unfaithful to the Lord in that he did not keep the command of the Lord, and also consulted a medium, seeking guidance, and did not seek guidance from the Lord. Therefore, the Lord slew him, and turned the kingdom over to David the son of Jesse."

While Abelard explicitly and implicitly refers to many other passages from 1 Samuel throughout the *Planctus David*, he ignores these alternate readings, choosing instead to draw only from 2 Samuel.³⁵ In this way, he avoids the issue of suicide and maintains the dignity of Saul's position in Israel. From another perspective, as poet Abelard moderates the most violent images associated with the aftermath of the battle and the images he does add to the lament, rather than appall the listener, trigger the imagination, engage the emotions, and elicit sympathy. Indeed, for Abelard's David, the loss of Saul can never be just the death of a brave warrior. His *Planctus David* is always about the slaying of Israel's King. As a result, even if the death of Saul would have touched him in a personal way, there is a certain emotional distance between himself and Saul that is appropriate to their more complex history together and is reflected by describing Saul only in terms of his office as King.

But such an official and reserved expression of mourning by Abelard's David is not the case with his lament for Jonathan. Here, the language, imagery, and emotions of David's voice most poignantly embody that defining impulse of the twelfth century humanists' sense of self that Colin Morris considers a hallmark of that time.³⁶ In the *Planctus David*, this primacy of human experience, as the measure of life's meaning up and against the power of death, is explored by Abelard when he probes the grieving process itself. It is best seen not only with reference to David's intense suffering as one bereaved, but also in the interplay of emotions that slip from present anguish to past moments, remembering what once was and longing for what might have been.

When Abelard's David Laments the Death of Jonathan

Thus, the effect of Saul's death on Abelard's David pales in comparison to his experience of the loss of Jonathan. Whatever Abelard understood about their relationship as a political alliance is overshadowed by his awareness of this death as the most personal, the most painful of David's sorrows. It is, in fact, the defining moment of the *Planctus David*. As he imagines Israel's David struggling with a sorrow that will have no end, Abelard probes the experience

35 This might have made a wonderful case for an exploration like that found in *Sic et non*, but its inclusion would be inappropriate and destroy the momentum of the increasingly emotive outpouring of grief in the *Planctus*.

36 Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual*. Also note the essay Ronald J. Ganze, "The Medieval Sense of Self," in *Misconceptions about the Middle Ages*, ed. Stephen J. Harris and Bryon L. Grigsby (New York: Routledge, 2008), 102–116.

of grieving in a way that reveals a clear, precise, and sensitive understanding of what happens when love and loss redefine—recreate, really—the very meaning of one's life. The single verse of the biblical poem becomes more than 28 lines of the *Planctus David*—as Abelard's David remembers Jonathan's love for him, his struggles with Jonathan's father, his inability to have prevented the tragedy, and that moment in time when his life was shattered by news of Jonathan's death.

Abelard's David first describes their relationship: "Jonathan, more than a brother to me, one in soul with me" (III, 45–46).³⁷ His literal inclusion of biblical phrases here immediately goes to the heart of the matter because that which binds them to each other as if they were one being—not two—is the very source of the pain that Jonathan's death inflicts. Death severs these ties in an absolute way and Abelard's David, who alone bears the burden of this sorrow, cries out: "what sins, what wicked deeds have torn apart our innermost flesh" (III, 47–48).

In his study of the *Planctus David*, Peter Dronke understood the passage to refer to the sins of David and Jonathan.³⁸ But since it is the death inflicted by the Philistines that separates them, one is more likely to think that Abelard's David means the crimes of the enemy. However, it is even more probable that Abelard has his David link sin and death here because he is thinking of the biblical account where David himself made the same connection, questioning Jonathan about Saul's vendetta against him: "What have I done? What is my guilt? And what is my sin before your father, that he seeks my life?" (1 Samuel 20.1).³⁹ Of course, David had not sinned against the king, a fact that Jonathan himself brings to Saul's attention.⁴⁰ From this perspective, then, it would be the sins of Saul as father that have a profound impact on two sons, a son of his own flesh and a son by marriage.

However, what matters for Abelard is David's suffering. It issues from David's awareness of the separation from Jonathan wrought by death as utterly final, the oneness of their very being irretrievably torn apart (*nostra sciderunt viscera*, III, 48). Before, Saul had forced David to flee and seek refuge away from

37 In the biblical lament, see 2 Samuel 1:26. See also 1 Samuel 18:1, 18:3, and 20:17.

38 Dronke, *Planctus and Satire*, 115.

39 At one point David even asks the king the same question. 1 Samuel 26:17–26:18: "Saul recognized David's voice, and said, 'Is this your voice, my son David?' And David said, 'It is my voice, my lord, O king.' And he said 'Why does my lord pursue after his servant? For what have I done? What guilt is on my hands?'"

40 1 Samuel 19:4: "Let not the king sin against his servant David, because his deeds have been of good service to you."

him, his family and followers. But nothing can compare to the separation that death imposes. For the first time in the *Planctus*, Abelard's David mentions tears, knowing his life is transformed, every joy forever touched by this sorrow: "... amid every joy will always be a tear" (IV, 67–68).

What Might Have Been

In Part V of the *Planctus*, Abelard's David looks back in anguish to the time when he and Jonathan last met. It would become the turning point of their history together. Scripture records Jonathan's explicit affirmation of David as Israel's future King, with Jonathan to step aside—but remain at his side. Furthermore, Jonathan claimed that, "Saul, my father knows this."⁴¹ After their meeting, David stayed behind in Horesh and Jonathan went home. It seemed as if all would be well. But one result of their agreement is that David would not be with Jonathan in the battle on Mount Gilboa. In the aftermath of Israel's defeat, Abelard's David now rues that day and mourns what might have been: "Alas, why did I agree/consent to the worst counsel/advice" (V, 69–70).⁴² In his regret, he grieves:

so that I was not a shield
in battle for you,
or wounded side by side
to die happily
because/since whatever love might do,
nothing is greater than this. (V, 71–76)

They had been as one soul and, if David had returned with Jonathan to the King's company, it might still be so, even in death. But that moment is past.

41 1 Samuel 23:17–23:18: "Do not fear [...] you will be king over Israel, and I will be beside you; and Saul my father knows this. Therefore, the two of them made an alliance before the Lord; David remained in the forest [and] Jonathan returned to his home." ('Ne timeas [...] tu regnabis super Israel, et ego ero tibi secundus, sed et Saul pater meus scit hoc. Percussit ergo uterque foedus coram Domino; mansitque Dauid in silua: Ionathas autem reuersus est in domum suam.') Also note that in the following chapter, at 1 Samuel 24:20, even Saul himself acknowledges that David will succeed him: "And now, behold, I [Saul] know that you [David] shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand."

42 1 Samuel 19:2: "And Jonathan told David, 'Saul my father seeks to kill you; therefore, take heed to yourself in the morning, stay in a secret place and hide yourself.'"

It is significant that for the first time in the *Planctus*, Abelard's David alludes to his love for Jonathan. In so doing, Abelard brings his David to a new insight, surely inspired by the words of Christ: "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends" (John 15.13). At the same time, to present David in this way is in marked contrast to the biblical narratives in which it is always Jonathan who takes the lead, who initiates their sacred bond, and who professes love for David. Even at that most touching moment of the biblical lament itself, David does not express his love for Jonathan but rather his sadness over the loss of Jonathan's love for himself (2 Samuel 1.26).⁴³ This insight assumes, of course, that the additional passage in verse 26 previously discussed ("Just as a mother loves her only son, so did I love you") is not known, as is the case with modern exegetes and commentators. However, the fact that Abelard's David expresses his love for Jonathan, and does so with such profound emotion, surely suggests the possibility of Abelard's awareness of the fuller text that perhaps also serves as the impetus for Abelard's very personal sensitivity to the meaning of a solemn and shared bond between them.

But, whether or not this is so, Abelard clearly thought that the love that drew them together was not one-sided. Furthermore, Abelard also knew that over the course of his lifetime, the biblical David would be no stranger to grief such as this and would come to understand the love that gives of self to others.⁴⁴ Later in his life, when lamenting the death of his son Absalom, for example, David himself uttered the same intense 'if only' that Abelard brings to the *Planctus* here: "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!"⁴⁵

43 In her discussion of the friendship between Jonathan and David, Tull notes this as she carefully compares and contrasts their love within the fuller context of David's life both before and after Jonathan's death. See Tull, "Jonathan's Gift."

44 Note as well Abelard's *planctus* for David mourning the death of Abner. See Wouters, "*Abner fidelissime*"; Annelise Wouters, "Une larme pour Abner: Une lamentation de l'Ancien Testament ramaniée par Pierre Abélard," in *Pierre Abélard: Colloque internationale de Nantes*, ed. Jean Jolivet and Henri Habrias (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2003), 295–306; and Annelise Wouters, "When Abelard Laments Abner: New Whine in Old Testament Bottles," in *Pierre Abélard, à l'aube des universités: Actes de la Conférence internationale, Université de Nantes, France, 3–4 October 2001*, ed. Jean Jolivet and Henri Habrias (Nantes: Université de Nantes, 2001), 91–100.

45 2 Samuel 18:32–18:33: "The king said to the Cushite: 'Is it well with the young man Absalom?' [...] And the king was deeply moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept; and as he went, he said, 'O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!'"

A Life Imbued with Sorrow

Abelard draws attention to yet another outcome that issues from the love David holds for Jonathan. The echo of Jonathan's own words are again filtered through the voice of Abelard's David who now experiences his own life as if he too were caught up in death:

and for me to live after you
is to die continually,
nor for life is
half a soul enough (V, 77–80)

The loss of Jonathan alters the very core of his own being, not just for a time but for the rest of his life.⁴⁶ Abelard's David longs for this death-in-life to end. His words almost tumble out, doing so in three couplets, the idea in the second line of each couplet opposing the idea in the first line:

either to share in triumph
or be with you in defeat,
either that I snatch you away
or lie down with you in death,
for you ending the life
which you so often saved.⁴⁷ (V, 84/85–90)

Precisely, clearly, Abelard's David pinpoints the ironic twist of fate that holds him in this bind of life-with-death. If he had served with Jonathan on the Mount, whether in triumph or in defeat, the power of death to separate would have been reversed. Abelard again integrates the very words of the biblical lament into the *Planctus*: "In life as in death they were not divided" (v. 23). What David had uttered of Saul and Jonathan, Abelard's David wishes it were so for Jonathan and himself: "... such that death unite us more than it separate us" (V, 89–92). But this was not to be. In the end, with the death of Jonathan, not one life but two know bitter finality. All that life will ever hold for David is now forever imbued with sorrow.

It is at this point that Abelard's David pulls back from his intense, emotive expressions of lament for Jonathan. Rather than continuing to share his own

46 Both Augustine, *Confessions*, 4.6.11 and Horace, *Carm.*, 1.3.8 are noted in *Planctus*, ed. Weinrich (1969d), 72.

47 1 Samuel 19:2, 20:4, and 23:16–23:19.

feelings, Abelard's David explicitly turns to that moment in time when he learns of the King's death and, once again, his focus returns to Saul (2 Samuel 1.16). As a result, the *Planctus* takes on a more narrative tone. Abelard both draws upon that Word and reshapes it, much as we have seen him do before. For example, here Abelard remembers the moment after the biblical David returns from a victorious battle and his meeting with a messenger from Saul's camp who brought news of the great defeat on Mount Gilboa, and, most importantly, the messenger's report that he had killed the wounded King:

And Saul said to me, 'Stand over me and slay me, for distress has seized me, and yet my entire life lingers in me.' So, standing over him, I killed him because I knew that he could not live after [his] fall; and I took the crown which was on his head and the armlet on his arm, and I have brought [them] here to you, my lord.⁴⁸

Although the messenger not only indicates his good intentions but also states that he followed the King's explicit command, Abelard's David describes him as a cruel or brazen messenger (*durissimus . . . nuntius* V, 97–98) who chose to bring the final blow to the wounded king, and adds that he "... spoke with pride in his heart" (V, 99–100). Abelard's reliance on this account of Saul's death is significant because, as we have mentioned before, he ignores the biblical texts that indicate Saul took his own life.⁴⁹ Without doubt, this is a deliberate move and gives him the opportunity yet again to depict Saul in a good light, and also, perhaps especially, to bring the question of the messenger's motives to the foreground.

It is no surprise, of course, to see Abelard focus on motive since intentionality is essential to culpability in Abelard's ethical stance. However, in this instance, Abelard alters what seems to be the intent of the biblical author who has the messenger present himself to David as if he had been merciful to the dying king. But, Abelard needs to give David grounds for the messenger's execution and by changing his motive, he can justify David's judgement.⁵⁰

48 2 Samuel 1:9–1:10: 'Et locutus est mihi: "Sta super me, et interfice me; quoniam tenent me angustiae, et adhuc tota anima mea in me est." Stansque super eum, occidi illum; sciebam enim quod uiuere not poterat post ruinam: et tuli diadema quod erat in capite eius, et armillam de brachio illius, et attuli ad te dominium meum huc.'

49 Both 1 Samuel 31 and 1 Chronicles 10 have just been discussed in this regard.

50 The biblical David does not consider the messenger's motives but only that he took the life of the Lord's anointed. In the hymns, Abelard again refers to the messenger as a liar: 'In Dauid caritas perfecta noscitur, Quae saeuos [domat] et hostes amplectitur, Perpetit

Abelard brings another provocative note, emphasizing the irony that when the messenger brings the news of Saul's death and his role in that regicide, he unknowingly intimates his own. Now, Abelard's David ties it all together: death delivered is death received: "... the one who brought the news/reported, death himself joined with the dead" (V, 101–102). This encounter with the messenger marks that moment in time when life changed forever. The King is dead and Jonathan also lies slain. David's future as king, though not guaranteed, is somewhat more secure.⁵¹ But, caught up in the grieving of his present moment, Abelard's David is not thinking of issues that lie in the future and, in fact, he is now ready to bring his lament to a close. Throughout the *Planctus David*, we have seen Abelard present the tragic aftermath of Israel's battle with the Philistines, the utter defeat and terror of death, its dissolution of ties, and the aftermath for all who grieve and mourn. The lyre that sings with David's sorrow for Israel, and for its King, and then cries out his desolate lament for Jonathan, now leads into the closing lines as Abelard's David moves from mourning to silence.

Thus, these last lines of the *Planctus David* (Part VI) return to the initial scenario: David, with his lyre, mourning the deaths that touched all of Israel certainly, but broke his spirit in particular. At some point, words no longer serve the one who grieves. All is spent. The past is lost, the present bitterly transformed, and but for the mourning, the future is unknown:

I give rest/silence to the lyre;
 I wish I could do so
 for the lamentations and tears.
 With hands worn from striking [the strings],

Sauli, quem planxit mortuum, Morte mox puniens mendacem nuntium.' See *Hymn. Par.*, 23 [Vespers], ed. Szövérfy (1975), vol. 2, 66–67. Note however, that in *Biblia Latina cum glossa ordinaria* Walafridi Strabonis aliorumque et interlineari Anselmi Laudunensis, et cum postillis ac moralitatibus Nicholai de Lyra et expositionibus Guillelmi Britonis in omnes prologus s. Hieronymi et additionibus Pauli Burgensis replicisque Matthiae Doering, 6 vols. (Basel: Johann Froben et Johann Petri, 1498), the question of lying is raised with reference to the messenger in the *Moraliter*. While this portion of the *Gloss* was probably not complete in Abelard's lifetime, no doubt its sources were available to him. For a more detailed discussion, see Smith, *The Glossa Ordinaria*.

- 51 In Julian Morgenstern, "David and Jonathan," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 78, no. 4 (1959), 322–325, Morgenstern discusses David's struggle related to kingly succession, pointing out Abner's role in support of Saul's only surviving son, Ishbosheth, as heir to the throne, even after David is anointed king of Judah. Also, consult the biblical narratives themselves, in 2 Samuel 2–5.

with sounds hoarse from lamenting
and so [my] spirit fails. (VI, 105–10)

As the music of the lyre is stilled, so too is the word.

A Biblical Word—More and Less

From the first lines of the *Planctus David*, Abelard's poem is studded with a broad range of personal pronouns. This personal dimension is also found in the way Abelard brings the human experience of loss to the foreground, whether it be the defeat on Mount Gilboa, the loss of a king, or a friend and ally, or even acknowledging God's absence in Israel's tragedy. Abelard also loves to play with the inner tensions between the infidels and the people of faith, arrogance and despair, and the very boundaries of life and death that taken together alter and transform, or simply bring David down.

Throughout the *Planctus* Abelard is keenly attuned to how David thinks, believes, and feels each of these experiences. It might be surprising then that in all of his exploration of David's loss of Jonathan, Abelard never refers to the complete passage with David's touching words of the love shared with Jonathan: "... very pleasant and loving, surpassing the love of women" (v. 26). Its absence from the *Planctus* is discussed at some length by Juanita Feros Ruys who correctly notes as inappropriate any reading of the passage that suggests a homosexual relationship.⁵² Unfortunately, this omission by Abelard is then presented by Ruys as a foundation for affirming Abelard's intent in the *Planctus David* to provide Heloise with a "new model of love beyond the demands and difficulties of sex and gender."⁵³ But would it not be the presence of these lines rather than their absence that might better serve her thesis? In fact, however, the weakness of any argument from silence (here the omission of the text) is even compounded by lifting the lines concerning Jonathan out of the context of the *Planctus* as a whole.

In addition, one also needs to keep in mind that this particular passage from verse 26 even if Abelard knew it in the fuller version we have cited, is not the only verse of the biblical lament that Abelard bypasses. For example, while he acknowledges both Saul and Jonathan as warriors, he ignores the vivid imagery of verse 22: "From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty."

52 Ruys, "*Ut sexu sic animo*," 14–23.

53 Ibid., 15.

In the same way, as we already mentioned, he ignored the account of the deaths of Saul and Jonathan found in 1 Samuel and 1 Chronicles. Just so with his gliding over most of verse 26 to focus on what is essential to the movement—this momentum of grieving—at the perfect moment within his *Planctus*: “Jonathan, more than a brother to me, one in soul with me” (III, 45–46). Abelard really does not need to say more. As we follow Abelard’s lead, we need to continuously balance the tension in his *Planctus* between its Scriptural source and his appropriation of that Word in and through a creative dynamic that can and does add or omit significant details. Sometimes, less is more.

There is much to be gained by considering the *Planctus David super Saul et Ionatha* in its entirety, particularly in relation to the biblical sources that provide not only the paradigm, but also the complex historical, cultural, and religious ethos that mediates great sorrow. One can immediately recognize the need for a ‘double hermeneutic,’ first addressing the biblical Word and then reflecting on Abelard’s reading of that Word.

One outcome of this study is that we can identify more precisely the daring step Abelard took as he adjusted biblical horizons. For example, we have listened to the Philistines berate Israel’s God and noticed how God’s saving presence is absent from the Mount. With Abelard, we looked into the heart of the messenger of sorrow to discern motive, a problematic interpretation yet one that some modern as well as medieval commentators would support. We also ‘walked in David’s shoes,’ as one might say, following the grieving process that moves from moments immersed in grief, to regretting what might have been, then feeling the anguish of death’s finality, knowing one is not and never will be the same. And then there is the silence.

Another result of this close reading of the *Planctus David* in its entirety is an appreciation for the poem in its own right, recognizing how, in and through words, Abelard actually ‘sings’ this new song through the voice of David.⁵⁴ It should not be surprising that the pattern of the words is like a musical composition. After all, that is precisely how Abelard designed the lament. As a result, we can join in the momentum that builds within the *Planctus* as it moves from events to persons, from the place on the Mount to the very heart of David’s grieving for Jonathan.

If one thinks of this in musical terms or modes of expression, Abelard’s David plays from the initial setting announcing the news of Israel’s defeat to what might be called a first movement: the Philistines hammering away at a

54 One should not forget that interest in this poem, and indeed all the planctus of Abelard, was generated initially by musical scholars and by medievalists drawn to the poetic tradition who recovered song and word.

broken people; this is followed by a brief lull or interlude where David calls the people, the daughters and even the land into mourning with him. Then the *Planctus* is at the heart of the matter, uncovering the sorrows that touch David's innermost being, and at each step, building to a crescendo when the death of Jonathan tears him apart. Finally, the *Planctus* closes with a coda that concludes the poem.

But beyond recognizing the inherent tension between the way Abelard integrates the Word with the *Planctus David* and the way he moves beyond the biblical parameters to horizons perceived only through his own insight and imagination—and beyond the beautiful balance between word and song that his poetic endeavor achieves—this study demonstrates that we are a long way from a fair assessment of the *Planctus* and its place in history. For example, the explicit parallels between the *Planctus David* and the eleventh century sequence, the *Parce continuis*, suggest that surely Abelard was aware of the earlier poem. And of course, there are other laments for Saul and/or Jonathan as yet unexamined from which it might even be inferred that Abelard's poem was either derived or their inspiration.⁵⁵ Then, in addition to planctus as a poetic genre itself, there are other avenues to pursue. Just what commentaries, homilies, question collections either consciously or unconsciously were at work in Abelard's own spirit as he pondered David's lament? And finally, closer to Abelard's own circle, we know that the very patterns of ideas and words in the *Planctus David* relevant to the death of Jonathan find parallels not only in Heloise's correspondence but also in Bernard of Clairvaux's poignant lament on the death of his brother Gerard.⁵⁶

Historians have always considered Abelard as an independent twelfth-century thinker, teacher, and writer who challenged the tradition. But Haskins' reevaluation of that century enhancing the primacy of human experience opened a new door for understanding Abelard in his own time. It is a perspective that in the last thirty years or so has found an audience in numerous scholars who recognize Abelard as more than the logician and theologian who almost singlehandedly seemed to transform ideas. Indeed, Abelard did not always stand apart and alone. Perhaps this is nowhere more evident than in his *Planctus David super Saul et Ionatha* where Abelard weaves the multiple strands of human experience of love and loss, merging past and present with

55 Note again the numerous planctus indicated in Yearley, "A Bibliography of Planctus."

56 Bernard of Clairvaux, Sermo 26, in *Sancti Bernardi Opera*, ed. J. Leclercq, Ch. Talbot, and H. M. Rochais (Rome: Editiones cistercienses, 1957), vol. 1, 169–181; and for the English translation, see Bernard of Clairvaux, Sermon 26, in the *Sermons on the Song of Songs II*, trans. Kevin Walsh, CFS 7 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1976), 58–73.

a grief that both breaks the biblical David's heart (*doleo super te, frater mi*) and cuts apart the very innards of Abelard's David (*nostra sciderunt uiscera*) and in so doing describes a suffering that ultimately touches the mind and heart of all who mourn.

Appendix

*Planctus David super Saul et Ionatha**

I	<i>Dolorum solatium, laborum remedium mea michi cithara</i>	I	Solace of sorrows, a healing of distress my lyre [is]for me
4	<i>nunc, quo maior dolor est iustiorque meror est, plus et necessaria.</i>		now, when sorrow is greater and sadness is more fitting and more necessary.
7	<i>Strages magna populi, regis mors et filii, hostium uictoria,</i>		A great massacre/slaughter of people, the death of a king and a son, the enemy victorious,
10	<i>ducum desolatio, uulgi desperatio luctu replent omnia.</i>		the leaders' desolation, the people's hopelessness/despair fills everything with sorrow/mourning.
II		II	
13	<i>Amalech inualuit, Israhel dum corrui; infidelis iubilat Philistea, dum lamentis macerat se Iudea</i>		Amalech prevailed/gained strength while Israel came to ruin; the faithless Philistine rejoices, while Judea torments itself with lamentations.
19	<i>Insultat fidelibus infidelis populus. In honorem maximum plebs aduersa, in derisum omnium fit diuina.</i>		A faithless people insults the people of faith. A hostile people [held] in greatest esteem [while] the holy one is held in mockery by everyone.

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| <p>25 <i>Insultantes inquit:</i>
 <i>"Ecce, de quo garriunt,</i>
 <i>qualiter hos prodidit</i>
 <i>deus suus,</i>
 <i>dum a multis occidit</i>
 <i>dis prostratus.</i></p> | <p>Tauting/scoffing they say:
 "Behold, their god of whom they babble
 has betrayed them
 while the one cast down
 has been killed
 by the many gods.</p> |
| <p>31 <i>Quem primum his prebuit,</i>
 <i>uictus rex occubuit.</i>
 <i>Talis est electio</i>
 <i>dei sui,</i>
 <i>talis consecratio</i>
 <i>uatis magni."</i></p> | <p>The one whom [their god] first gave to them,
 the defeated king lies dead.
 Such is the election
 of their own god,
 such the consecration
 of the great one/seer."</p> |
| <p>III</p> | |
| <p>37 <i>Saul regnum fortissime,</i>
 <i>uirtus inuicta Ionathe,</i>
 <i>qui uos nequiuit uincere</i>
 <i>permissus est occidere.</i></p> | <p>Saul, bravest of kings,
 Jonathan, in virtue unsurpassed,
 the one who could not conquer you
 has been allowed to slay you.</p> |
| <p>41 <i>Quasi not esset oleo</i>
 <i>consecratus dominico,</i>
 <i>scelesti manus gladio</i>
 <i>iugulatur in prelio.</i></p> | <p>As if [Saul] had not been consecrated
 to the Lord with oil,
 in battle [his] throat cut
 by a sword in a wicked hand.</p> |
| <p>45 <i>Plus fratre michi, Ionatha,</i>
 <i>in una mecum anima,</i>
 <i>que peccata, que scelera</i>
 <i>nostra sciderunt uiscera.</i></p> | <p>Jonathan, more than a brother to me,
 one in soul with me,
 what sins, what wicked deeds
 have torn apart our innermost flesh.</p> |
| <p>49 <i>Expertes montes Gelboe</i>
 <i>roris sitis et pluuiæ,</i>
 <i>nec agrorum primicie</i>
 <i>uestro succrescant incole.</i></p> | <p>Mountains of Gilboa may you
 be deprived of dew and rain,
 may the first fruits of the fields
 never grow for your people.</p> |
| <p>IV</p> | |
| <p>53 <i>Ue, ue tibi, madida</i>
 <i>tellus cede regia,</i>
 <i>qua et te, mi Ionatha,</i>
 <i>manus strauit impia!</i></p> | <p>Woe, woe to you, the soil
 steeped/soaked with royal blood,
 and where an unholy hand
 laid you low, my Jonathan!</p> |

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| <p>57 <i>Ubi christus domini
Israhelque incliti
morte miserabili
sunt cum suis perdit.</i></p> <p>61 <i>Planctum, Sion filie,
super Saul sumite,
largo cuius munere
uos ornabant purpure.</i></p> <p>65 <i>Tu michi, mi Ionatha,
flendus super omnia;
inter cuncta gaudia
perpes erit lacrima.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">V</p> <p>69 <i>Heu cur consilio
adquieui pessimo,
ut tibi presidio
non essem in prelio,</i></p> <p>73 <i>uel confossus pariter
morerer feliciter,
cum, quid amor faciat,
maius hoc non habeat,</i></p> <p>77 <i>et me post te uiuere
mori sit assidue,
nec ad uitam anima
satis sit dimidia.</i></p> <p>81 <i>Uicem amicitie
uel unam me reddere
oportebat tempore
summe tunc angustie,</i></p> <p>85 <i>triumphi participem
uel ruine comitem,
ut te uel eriperem
uel tecum occumberem,</i></p> | <p>Where the anointed of the Lord
and the glory of Israel
were destroyed by miserable death
with their people.</p> <p>Daughters of Sion, take up
a lament over Saul
whose generous gifts
adorned you in purple.</p> <p>My Jonathan, for me, you
above all [are] to be grieved;
amid every joy
will always be a tear.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">V</p> <p>Alas, why did I agree/consent
to the worst council/advice
so that I was not a shield
in battle for you,</p> <p>or wounded side by side
to die happily
because/since, whatever love may do,
it has nothing greater than this,</p> <p>and for me to live after you
is to die continually,
nor for life is
half a soul enough.</p> <p>For the sake of/because of friendship
it was presumed/expected
I render/give one thing at this time
of extreme/greatest anguish, either</p> <p>to share in triumph
or be with you in defeat,
either that I snatch you away
or lie down with you in death,</p> |
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| 89 | <i>uitam pro te finiens,
quam saluasti tociens,
ut et mors nos iungeret
magis quam disiungeret.</i> | for you ending the life
which you so often saved,
such that death unite us
more than it separate us. |
| 93 | <i>Infauſta uictoria
potius interea
quam uana, quam breuia
hinc percepi gaudia!</i> | In the meantime, a rather
luckless/ill-fated victory,
how vain, how fleeting/brief
the joys I had from this! |
| 97 | <i>Quam cito duriffimus
eſt ſecutus nuntius,
quem in ſuam animam
locutum ſuperbiam</i> | How quickly the moſt cruel/brazen
meſſenger followed,
who ſpoke with pride
in his heart |
| 101 | <i>mortuis, quos nuntiat,
illata mors aggregat,
ut doloris nuntius
doloris ſit ſocius.</i> | the one who brought the news/reported,
death himſelf joined with the dead
ſo that the meſſenger of ſorrow
might be a partner/partaker of ſorrow. |
| | VI | VI |
| 105 | <i>Do quietem fidibus;
uellem, ut et planctibus
ſic poſſem et fletibus.</i> | I give reſt/silence to the lyre;
I wiſh I could do ſo
for the lamentations and tears. |
| 108 | <i>Leſis pulſu manibus
raucis planctu uocibus
deficit et ſpiritus.</i> | With hands worn from ſtriking [the ſtrings]
with ſounds hoarſe from lamenting
and ſo [my] ſpirit fails. |

* Weinrich's Latin edition: "*Dolorum ſolatium*," 70–72.

Abelard on the First Six Days

Peter Cramer

Abelard wrote the *Expositio in Hexaemeron* in answer to a request from Heloise and the nuns of the Paraclete, along with the book of hymns edited by Joseph Szövérfy under the title of the *Hymnarius paraclitensis*, the adaptation of the Rule of Benedict in Letter 8 of the correspondence, and other texts.¹ This *Exposition on the Six-Day Work* deals with the text of Genesis down to 2,25, just after the second account of the creation of man and the fashioning of Eve from Adam's rib, and just before the entry of the serpent and the eating of the fruit. It has been dated to the mid-1130s by its editors Mary Romig and David Luscombe: after the foundation of the Paraclete in 1129 and before the completion of the *Theologia 'Scholarium'*.²

Belonging as it does, in a broad sense, to the correspondence of Abelard and Heloise, this book of Abelard's poses to the historian some of the questions that have arisen from the letters themselves. Might the *Exposition on the Six-Day Work* be best understood, as the letters have been understood, as a debate related to the emergent tradition of the schools, which here, in the commentary, latches onto a number of *quaestiones disputatae* implied in the story told by the Bible, and then, at a more general level across the text as a whole, stages a colloquy between the two genres of philosophy and the science of revealed truth?³ To read the commentary with these other texts in a corner of the eye brings an enlargement of possible sense. It suggests a shared idiom across the different pieces which increases the intensity of each one of them. Should we, for example, be reading Abelard's thoughts on the *Hexaemeron* in parallel with the hymns for night and day office in the book of hymns written for the Paraclete and Heloise's nuns? Eileen Kearney, who published a

1 I would like to thank Babette Hellemans warmly for her great help with this essay. She suggested the idea of writing it and contributed generously to the conception of it throughout.

2 *Hex.*, available in Mary Romig, ed., with David Luscombe, *Expositio in Hexameron, in Petri Abaelardi Opera Theologica*, vol. 5, CCCM 15 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 74. The translation is available in Wanda Zemler-Cizewski, ed. and trans., *Peter Abelard: An Exposition on the Six-Day Work*, Corpus christianorum in Translation, continuatio mediaevalis 8 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011). Here I have used my own translations.

3 Peter von Moos, "Abaelard, Heloise und ihr Paraklet," 588–589.

finely-tuned study of the *Expositio* in 1980, makes a remark that brings one up short: "... the complete resolution [of the commentary] is not confined to terms that imply the solution to a problem. In this instance, the meaning of the Word is not so much uncovered or disclosed as encountered. The question raised by the fact of sin is ultimately satisfied by a song."⁴ And the problem—the heart of Abelard's problem as he reads—is the productive dissonance of Genesis, juxtaposing a perfect creation, the world as God's mind enacted, with the fall into sin and into history or time. The song which seems to sharpen this problem—and leave it unsolved—is the *Exultet* hymn for the blessing of the newly-lit Easter candle at the moment of resurrection. "O happy blame, to have deserved such and so great a redeemer." (*O felix culpa que talem ac tantum meruit habere redemptorem.*)⁵ The idea that a song points to an encounter with the Word, delineates it and so puts it at a greater distance, the instinct of *Noli me tangere* recurrent in the visual art of Christendom, is a clue with which to read Abelard's hymns for the nuns of the Paraclete. Again and again, these songs have a way of turning the dark paradoxes within redemption into brief, spare and exquisite dances of delight:

Let the night of tears go on, and the three-day span persist, long dusk of weeping, till when the Lord rises, the thankful morning of joy repays grief.⁶

The search for what is problematic is never far away in Abelard. In his letter preface to the *Commentary*, written to Heloise, he stresses the difficulty offered by the report in Genesis of the first six days. The text ranks with Ezechiel and

4 Eileen Kearney, "Peter Abelard as Biblical Commentator: A Study of the *Expositio* in *Hexaemeron*," in *Petrus Abaelardus (1049–1142): Person, Werk und Wirking*, ed. Rudolf Thomas (Trierer Theologische Studien, Bd. 38, 1980), 199–210, here 207.

5 *Hex.*, 455.2730–455.2731, 102. The use of the hymn here is part of the drama of Abelard's argument. He begins by explaining the Fall as the occasion of a greater love of humankind for the God who sacrifices himself, a love that turns a bad into a good; but then refers to the 'happy blame' of the *Exultet* as if to illuminate what is problematic in this idea. It seems a reflex of Abelard's thought that explanation defines the contour of mystery, while mystery provokes to the unfolding of problems.

6 'Nox ista flebilis praesensque triduum,/ Quo demorabitur fletus, sit vesperum,/ Donec laetitiae mane gratissimum/ Surgente Domino sit maestis redditum.' See *Hymn. Par.*, 3, available in Joseph Szövérfy, ed., *Peter Abelard's Hymnarius Paraclitensis: An Annotated Edition with Introduction*, 2nd ed., 2 vols., *Third of the Night Prayers for Easter Friday* (Berlin and Leiden: Brill, 1980), vol. 2, 109.

the Song of Songs in the resistance it offers.⁷ What is really difficult though, is to get bearings on the historical meaning, something that ‘among us’—presumably meaning in the Christian tradition of exegesis—only the *perspicax ingenium* of Augustine had attempted. What Augustine ended up with, as he put it himself, was opinion rather than confident assertion. There were more doubts than certainties.⁸ The commentary of Augustine (*De Genesi ad litteram*) was so difficult to follow that Heloise now wished Abelard to clarify things. *Factus insipiens*, says Abelard with St Paul (2 Cor. 12,11), *vos me coegistis*. “I have been made a fool. You put me to it.”⁹ The quotation from Paul is revealing. It aligns Abelard, the teacher or *magister*, with the apostle, burdened with an apostolate which is beyond his doing; and so it suggests an association further back with Moses, the very prophet whose words he is to make sense of. One recalls the difficulty Moses had with his speech (Exodus 4,10).

But doubting is a method too, if reluctantly adopted. Abelard now turns to Aristotle, whom he finds in Boethius’ translation of the *Categories*: “Perhaps it will be difficult to say anything sure on such matters, unless they are gone over again and again. But it is not a fruitless exercise to work by doubting each single thing.”¹⁰ Doubting each single thing: *dubitare de singulis*. This is what Augustine has been doing; yet the phrase characterises Abelard’s own approach to Genesis (often his approach elsewhere too) even better than it does Augustine’s. The vocabulary of attack, of intellectual aggression, comes easily to Abelard the knight manqué, and one can see that his taste for overcoming in a struggle might lie behind a relentless refusal to take the textual traditions for granted. Stripped of the specific military reference of the *Historia calamitatum* or even here in the commentary, the refusal to take as read, and a consequent hesitancy, was in the air: it can be felt in the probing of the canonists into the ‘authorities’ of the past. In what sense authority?—one can hear Ivo of Chartres asking in the preface to his *Decretum*. What authority do conflicting authorities have? But when Abelard hesitates here, in his word-by-word exegesis, for example over three possible translations of the Hebrew for

7 *Hex.*, 2, 3. As Origen put it, in line with the Hebrew tradition, these are texts reserved for wise old men. ‘Vnde apud Hebreos institutum esse aiunt predictorum scriptorum expositionem pre nimia difficultate sui nonnisi maturis sensibus seniorum committendam esse, sicut et Origenes meminit [...]’ Translation: “And so they say it is laid down that the interpretation of these writings, because of their unusual difficulty, is to be trusted to none but the seasoned judgment of those who are older[...].”

8 *Ibid.*, 5,41–5,47, 4.

9 *Ibid.*, 7,61–7,62, 5. On Abelard the *magister*, see Clanchy, *Abelard*, 65–94.

10 *Hex.*, 5,48–5,50, 4–5: “‘Fortasse,’ inquit, “difficile sit de huiusmodi rebus confidenter declarare, nisi sepe pertracta sint. Dubitare autem de singulis non erit inutile.”’

the hovering of the Spirit over the waters, his habitual doubting is also a fitting response, perhaps like the stuttering of Moses, to the abrupt speech of Creation.¹¹ The difficulty, after all, is the difficulty not only of the words, but of Creation itself: “the measureless abyss of profundity which is Genesis”, in Abelard’s expression. Measureless, so that the mind naturally calls on the Holy Spirit, at whose dictation the story of Creation was written, in order to get some hold on it.

Scrutinising the measureless abyss of profundity which is Genesis with a threefold commentary, namely historical, moral and mystical, let us call on the Spirit at whose dictation these things were written.¹²

Difficulty, making itself felt through doubts and hesitations, is as it were a sustaining of the shock of Creation, in the sense of a radical iteration of it. The likelihood seems even to emerge from the Spirit hovering over unformed waters and over the pen of the prophet, that the prolonging of Creation in time through an arrested, interrupted speech, a continuous dialogue between fluency and hesitancy mimed by exegesis, has the form of a series of ‘takes’ on the force with which things came into being, of sufficient intensity in each take or utterance (or episode of Creation) to do justice to, not just to mask, this original moment.

Two conceptions occupy the early pages of the commentary. When the Psalmist speaks of one “Who made the heavens in his mind” (*Qui fecit celos in intellectu*),¹³ he is referring to the double moment of Creation: one Creation is in God’s mind, another in the material effect: in the work accomplished. The one “In that divine setting in order done by providence”, the other “in the work itself” (*In ipsa divinę providencię ordinatione*, and then *in opere*).¹⁴ One is speech, the other the enactment following from speech. The speech,

11 Ibid., 27–38, 12–15. The Hebrew is translated, Abelard tells us, sometimes as ‘Et spiritus domini ferebatur super aquas’ (‘were borne over the waters’ or ‘hovered over’) sometimes as ‘fouebat aquas’ (‘warmed or fomented the waters’). What it means, he adds, is that it ‘uolitabat super aquas’ (‘flitted’ or ‘fluttered over the waters’). Both *ferebatur* and *fouebat*, as he shows, can make good sense. ‘Fouebat aquas’ gives him the chance to go into the metaphor of the world-egg, and on this, see the two rich pages in Dronke, *Fabula*, 95–96.

12 *Hex.*, 8.65, 5: ‘Immensam igitur habissum profunditatis geneseos triplici perscrutantes expositione, historica scilicet, morali et mistica, ipsum inuocemus spiritum quo dictante hec scripta sunt [...]’

13 Ibid., 43.345, 16 (Psalm 135.5).

14 Ibid., 45.370–45.371, 17.

Augustine thought, was an “unchanging reason, with no noise or sound in it, not an utterance that builds and fades away, but a force which stays for all time and works in time.”¹⁵ The rhythm of speech then act can be picked up in Genesis 1, 3: “God said, Let there be light, and there was made light” (*Dixit deus: fiat lux. Et facta est lux*). What we are hearing is a doubling within Creation, reminiscent of the Platonic sense of an intelligible world made real, of logos become flesh, a sense which is now strained through the idiom of Genesis. *Et factum est uespere et mane dies unus*. Evening came, and morning, and one day passed. “The conception in the divine mind”, says Abelard, “how the work which is to be is to be disposed, [Moses] calls ‘evening’. ‘Morning’ he calls the working through of that conception and the effect of God’s disposing brought to completion in the six days.”¹⁶ Evening and morning: thought and action. Everything is thus settled within a rational frame. I have happily said Platonic, and certainly Abelard refers to Plato in this commentary, to the *Timaeus*. The incidence of Platonism on the thinking here, a problem linked with the question of how much autonomy Abelard wishes to give to the created world and thus to the stirring of an interest in Nature under its own steam associated with, for example, William of Conches, would need more work. Whatever the answer to questions like this though, the suppleness of Abelard’s use of Plato is clear.¹⁷ He draws Platonist elements into the ligaments of his own thinking. In the hymns for the Paraclete, whose response to the ordered making of Creation is the response of a (reasoned, monastic) form of life uttered through ritual song, ‘reason’ gains the immediacy it has for those who live a common life and together collect their thoughts in the night prayers with a view to enactment the next day:

15 Ibid., 49.387–49.389, 18, quoting Augustine, *De ciuitate dei*, 16.6, 507: ‘Dei ante factum suum locutio ipsius facti sui est incommutabilis ratio, que non habet sonum strepentem atque transeuntem sed uim sempiternę manentem et temporaliter operantem.’

16 *Hex.*, 69.505–69.511, 22: ‘Ac rursus ipsam eandem operationem mane nuncupat, secundum quod opera postmodum completa sese uisibilem prebuit. Diuinę itaque mentis conceptum in dispositione future operis uesperam dicit: mane uero appellat ipsam conceptus illius operationem et diuinę dispositionis effectum in vi diebus consummatum.’

17 The complexity—and suppleness—of Platonic *ratio* for Abelard makes itself felt in the opening pages of his *TC*, where the remark in the *Timaeus* that God made every single thing for a reason, that there is, as it were, no waste in Creation, stands at the opening of the ‘reason’ of the Trinity: ‘Omne quod gignitur, ex aliqua causa necessaria gignitur. Nihil enim fit, cuius ortum non legitima causa et ratio praecedat.’ See Plato, *Timaeus a Calcidio*, 28a, 20, quoted in *TC*, 2.73.33–2.73.35. In these opening pages, as throughout the *Hex.*, there is a highly suggestive duet of the voices of Moses and Plato.

Rationem

Pro cunctis exigit

Is qui cuncta

Pro nobis condidit

"He who established all things for us demands that reason be returned for all that is." (*Matins on the third day of the week.*)¹⁸ The thrust of the *Exposition on the Six-Day Work* too, is the attempt to discover a rationality in the created world which is not merely that of formal or abstract perfection.

Perhaps it is to be expected in these circumstances that Abelard should turn to the Gospel of John. *Quod factum est, in ipso uita erat*. "Whatever was made, there was life in it." (1, 3–4)¹⁹ Abelard has the trained ear of the grammarian. He can pick up the diverse idioms with which a consistent idea is expressed. Using his ear like this, he even conveys an understanding of Creation as coherent design repeated through the strains of diverse idioms in time. Creation, in other words, goes on happening all the time. "For God produces each single thing from the fold of his secret, in making visible in the work what he had conceived before in the mind."²⁰ The attentiveness to the singular, the same phenomenon of scattering in the created world which made the prophet stutter, is arresting. This is also Aristotle's 'doubt over each single thing', and as one reads through the events of the six days, one day after another, the realisation dawns that Creation is ambiguously of one moment *and* extension over time. The very structure of the six days, whereby what is really one act of Creation is experienced as an elapse of six days, shows how we are faced with a collusion of a beginning from outside time and a continuation within time, in history: of day and days. Indeed, the collusion, to make proper sense, would have to be radical. It would have to mean that the continuity of history itself, the linkage between one event and another, the plot or 'intrigue' by which diverse intentions of diverse actors in history, or different types of causation, long- and short-term, affect one another and come to form part of the same fabric, is invested with a beginning outside time.²¹ This implausible collaboration resolves itself

18 *Hymn. Par.*, ed. Szövérfy (1980), 25.4.

19 *Hex.*, 46.368–46.369, 17.

20 *Ibid.*, 70.18–70.19, 23: 'Quasi enim de sinu quodam secreti sui singula deus producit, dum exhibet opera quod ante conceperat mente; nec a conceptu dissidet opus, dum quod mente disponitur, opere completur.'

21 Paul Ricoeur, *Temps et récit*, vol. 1: *L'intrigue et le récit historique* (Paris: Seuil, 1983), makes a compelling and systematic study of this. 'Intrigue' translates the English 'plot,' but it is useful to keep it in the background, because it expresses nicely the very complexity of

as *ratio* or form, in the rational beauty of things. But the form is an endlessly more complex one than the initial sense of a reasoning spirit hovering over unloosed waters, or of an *intelligibilis* containing a *sensilis*,²² would have led us to expect. It mirrors, curiously, what Yves Congar said of inspiration:

*L'Eglise est la réalité premièrement voulue par Dieu. Comme elle n'est pas posée de façon intemporelle, mais qu'elle apparaît dans l'histoire, la volonté de Dieu qui la fonde en un moment du temps a un effet tout particulier à ce moment de ses origines. Cet acte de fondation engage Dieu autrement que la simple conservation en son type de l'Eglise déjà fondée; car la conservation, qui répond à la vie historique de l'Eglise, ne suppose qu'une assistance de soi négative. L'Écriture appartient au moment de la fondation tout comme les sacrements, la primauté pétrinienne, et, ajoute le P. Rahner, la tradition orale, interprétative de l'Écriture.*²³

Congar's thought is that the primordial breath of inspiration is also the continuous breathing (as one might put it) of the Church's historicity. The prophet is the astute observer of history, who can see it for what it really is, a temporal response to absolute beginnings. Or: the 'inspiration' of the Scriptures bears in it, hidden and then unburdening itself over time, the working through of the Church to its end; inspiration anticipates eschaton and all that lies between the two, so that history is the unbroken interpretation of an originating

history that Ricoeur hopes to solve through the suppleness of narrative. Only narrative has both the suppleness and the coherence to mediate between the false logos of historical laws and the intolerable chaos which would result from leaving the past as it is.

22 *Hex.*, 46.363–46.365, 17: '[...] duas creationes duos esse mundos, unum uidelicet intelligibilem, alteram sensilem, astruxere philosophi.' Translation: "The philosophers have asserted the two creations to be two worlds, one intelligible and the other sensible or physical."

23 Yves M.-J. Congar, "Inspiration des écritures canoniques et apostolicité de l'Église," in *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 45 (1961), 32–42, republished in Yves M.-J. Congar, "Inspiration des écritures canoniques et apostolicité de l'Église," in *Sainte Eglise: Études et approches ecclésiologiques* (Paris: Cerf, 1964), 187–200, here 188: "The Church is the first reality willed by God. She is not put in place by a timeless gesture, but appears in history, and this means that the will of God, founding her in a moment of time, has an effect which is particular to this moment of her origins. The act of founding requires of God that he should do more than simply maintain the Church in the state she was in at her beginning. For [mere] conservation, as a way of handling the historical life of the Church, would then be nothing better than a kind of negative involvement. Scripture belongs to the moment of foundation, as do the sacraments, the primacy of Peter, and, Father Rahner adds, the oral, interpretive tradition of Scripture."

moment which remains internal to it. Congar, who is reading and defending Karl Rahner in saying this—and defending a certain sense of reform, writing in 1961 with Vatican II not long off—links this ontological unity of historicity and origin, the unity of inspiration and interpretation, with the infallibility of the magisterium.²⁴ Abelard, no doubt, would have been more hesitant in his understanding of reform. Some of the fragility of his perceptions even brings Hopkins to mind. Each breath after the first breath is a matter to be equally thankful for, comes equally as a surprise, a positive presence in time, like the ‘world-mothering air’ of Hopkins’ poem, *The Blessed Virgin compared to the Air we Breathe*:

Wild air, world-mothering air,
Nestling me everywhere,
That each eyelash or hair
Girdles; goes home betwixt
The fleeciest, frailest-flixed
Snowflake; that’s fairly mixed
With, riddles, and is rife,
In every least thing’s life . . .

I said before that Abelard was concerned with two things in the early passages of the commentary. One is the bearing out of the conception in God’s mind through the work of Creation, the enactment of thought. The other is this question of what Congar calls ‘conservation’, of keeping things going after the initial gesture of bringing them into being. Does God do no more than conserve Nature once He has made it from non-being? The distinction Abelard

24 Congar, “Inspiration,” (1964), 189: “Le P. Rahner estime que sa position a l’avantage de bien situer l’un par rapport à l’autre le magistère et l’Écriture: l’un ne supprime pas l’autre, ils s’appellent mutuellement. Le magistère est faculté de interpréter infailliblement l’Écriture; son infaillibilité est en continuité avec l’infaillibilité de cette intervention absolue de Dieu au commencement; sa valeur tient au fait que ce qui a été posé alors est une révélation définitive et totale.” The whole essay of Congar, and the article by Rahner which it takes up—see Rahner, *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 78 (1956), 137–168—seems explosive from the point of view of the question of authority in this time before Vatican II. Does the belonging to one another of inspiration and interpretation lead towards infallibility or hesitancy? A similar question might be asked of the eleventh and twelfth-century approaches to Reform. See Karl Leyser, “The Polemics of Papal Revolution,” in *Medieval Germany and Its Neighbours*, Karl Leyser (London: Hambledon, 1982), 138–160.

often makes between *creare* and *formare*,²⁵ between bringing into being from non-being and the shaping and clarification of what is already made but has as yet no form, (the *inanis et uacua* of Genesis 1, 2) might suggest very much what Congar means by *une assistance en soi négative*. In other words Nature, once there, can do most of the work herself, out of her abundant capacity for self-metamorphosis.²⁶ One episode that seems to confirm this distinction between *creare* and *formare* is the division of the waters from the waters by the firmament in Genesis 1, 7. The purpose of this separation, and the real sense of it, remain a riddle.²⁷ How, for example, might these two bodies of water be connected with the story of the Flood? Is the upper body the cause of rain, or does rain come from the rising of waters from the earth, which then fall again? This is a telling passage in the commentary, because it shows Abelard's literal method at work. His instinct all the time is to set out from the premise that the words of Genesis are telling us something historically, materially,

25 *Hex.*, 21.151–21.156, 9: ‘Bene autem de elementis dictum est CREAVIT potius quam “formavit,” quia creari proprie id dicitur quod de non-esse ita ad esse perducitur ut preiacentem non haberet materiam nec in aliquo primitus subsisteret nature statu. Cum autem de ipsa iam materia preparata adiunctione forme aliquid fit, recte illud formari dicitur [...]’ Translation: “It was said well when it was said of the elements not that He formed them but that He created them, because what is correctly called ‘created’ is what is brought from non-being into being, where it neither has any material that goes before it, nor exists beforehand in any state of nature. But when some thing becomes, out of material already prepared for it and by the addition to it of a form, it is rightly said to be ‘formed’ [...]”

26 *Ibid.*, 21.176–21.187, 10: ‘Ylem autem, id est siluam, ideo precipue substantiam corpoream dici arbitror quod lignea materies maxime ad formandum se tractabilem prebeat in qua frequentius operamur. Sic et corpoream substantiam ad successionem formarum seu qualitatum aptissimam esse cognoscimus. Quoniam non solum per accidentales, uerum etiam per substantiales immutari non desinit et per species uariari, ut quod modo inanimatum est, modo animatum fiat, et econuerso. Et quod modo hoc est, morte dissolutum, in aliam transit speciem, et per continuam effluxionem uel influxionem natura uariari non desinat corporea, atque per species immutari.’ Translation: “*Hyle* though, that is forest [*silua*], this physical substance is named, no doubt because wood and what is wooden, material we so often work with, has a very great aptitude for being shaped [*ad formandum*]; and likewise, we see that physical substance is most apt to becoming a succession of forms or qualities, for not only in its accidental but also in its substantial [forms and qualities] it never ceases being changed, and varied in its species, so that what is one moment inanimate is another moment animate, and the other way about. And this thing here now, dissolved by death, passes over into another species; and by a continual flowing outward and flowing inward again, physical nature does not cease varying, undergoing changes of species.”

27 *Ibid.*, 109–127, 30–35.

physically true, but that like any words, they call on a certain wiliness if they are to be understood fully. However tricky language is, it is about something that is really there. The two bodies of water must in some way be really there—and like everything else from the hand of God, which means everything else there is, they must be for a purpose in relation with everything else. That we cannot (yet) see what that purpose is, or quite what the bodies of water are, is further proof that the initial ordaining of Nature is purely the result of the will of God, a miracle outside Nature herself. We must expect miracles to be beyond our comprehension, even if we can sometimes follow some of the design that went into them. Or again: a riddle is a symptom of the concrete existence of something, like a footprint in the sand. (There is possibly a certain stress as the twelfth century goes by on this alertness to a trace of what is really there, and we find it in the two paintings of the St Albans Psalter showing first the Supper at Emmaus and then, as if directly from the supper table and leaving only a fish behind as a token of disappearance for the startled and bereft apostles, the Ascension. Above, not quite gone yet, are Christ's feet vanishing upward through an arch.) What shows through, in the pursuit of this literal method, is the modest proposal of the premise: that there is something there behind the ruses of language. We are back with the single things, and with the growing conviction that the many mutant, tangled, shifting forms which follow the original act of making, modest as they may be (like the fish on the plate), or grand like the two bodies of water in Genesis, if we only know how to read them, have as much force as their explosive first ancestor. To walk through the same landscape every day is not to diminish the effect of the first time it struck the eye, or not if we know how to see.

When it comes to it, the distinction between 'creating' and 'forming' does not hold very strictly. The one-off of beginning spills into the perpetual energy of metamorphosis; the pure will of God into its reverberations; miracle into observed reality. Abelard can find testimony of the inter-penetration of God's will and Nature in Plato: "You are not immortal [says Plato's God to the gods of the heavenly bodies, in Chalcidius' translation of the *Timaeus*], nor indissoluble; yet you will never be dissolved, and you will never have to undergo the necessity of death, because my will is a greater bond and a stronger one for the sustaining of eternity than the vital bonds out of which your eternity has its growth and of which it is made up."²⁸ The relief with which the things of the world stand out as they undergo time and change, and as the exegete scans

28 Plato, *Timaeus* (1962), 41b, 35, quoted in *Hex.*, 124.832–124.837, 34: 'Immortales quidem nequaquam nec omnino indissolubiles nec tamen unquam dissoluemini nec mortis necessitate subibitis, quia uoluntas mea maior est nexus et uegetatior ad eternitatis

language in search of their singular realities, is apparent in Abelard's handling of the relation of speech and light. Until He says, "Let there be light", God is silent. "In the beginning God created heaven and earth", not: "In the beginning, God said . . ." ²⁹ Once the original of each element begins to be given form by light, there is something to speak of, so that speech itself becomes a kind of light, a lighting up of things, a speech which man can learn from and respond to with his own speech of praise: the *laus operum*, the song to Nature which is also the song to its master craftsman. The creatures which are Nature, made servants of God by Creation, respond to Him with the familiarity of servant speaking back to master. From the prophet Baruch we have a warm sense of beasts and stars all filled with responsive souls, not entities driven by the abstract forces of 'formare', but animate beings:

He framed the abiding earth, and filled it with cattle and four-footed beasts of every kind. It is on his errand that the light goes forth, his summons that it obeys with awe; joyfully the stars shine out, keeping the watches he has appointed, answer when he calls their muster-roll, and offer their glad radiance to him who fashioned them. (3, 32–5) ³⁰

Perhaps it would be fair to say: the prayer offered by man is a joining-in with the conversation of God and the abiding earth. "He called on the earth. 'We're here', said the earth, and she lit up with her radiance", to give a more literal translation of the verses of Baruch than the one I have copied above out of Ronald Knox. And the purpose of Abelard's commentary, an effort at interpreting the opening of Genesis which he offers as part of his advice about how Heloise and her nuns are to live the monastic life, increasingly press on us the question whether he is not also, instinctively, treating exegesis, with its necessary content of difficulty and enlightenment, as an activity related to praying, a response to the beginning of things by the repeated, alert scrutiny of them

custodiam quam illi nexus uitales ex quibus eternitas uestra coaugmentata atque composita est.'

- 29 *Hex.*, 51, 18–19: 'ET FACTA EST LUX. Hoc est iuxta hoc quod in uerbo mentis suę deus ordinauerat, opera compleuit, illis uidelicet confusionis quas diximus tenebris sequentis distinctionis luce remotis. Nec est pretereundem quod superius in creatione celi et terre non est scriptum: DIXIT DEUS, ET FACTUM EST ITA, sicut in sequentibus per singula opera scriptum uidemus; sed quasi primo tacuit deus, et a luce loqui exorsus est.'
- 30 Quoted in *ibid.*, 52.411–52.414, 19: 'Perfecit terram et adimpleuit eam pecudibus. Vocauit eam et audiuit in tremore. Stelle autem dederunt lumen in custodiis suis, et letate sunt. Vocate sunt, et dixerunt: "Assumus," et luxerunt cum iocunditate.' Abelard gives it as Jeremiah.

(and of the text which puts us in mind of them) after the event. Interpretation, it seems, is a form of life.

There is an implied euphoria in the reasoned order of Creation. But already the notion of an extension of Creation into time introduces a note of sobriety. When Abelard opposes the scepticism of the philosopher to the astrologer's claim to know future contingents there is a whiff of the professional, Le Goff's 'intellectual of the twelfth century' perhaps, condescending to the con man.³¹ This is not a problem lightly resolved. After all, Moses was said to be an adept of the art of the stars. What makes sense, though, is to distinguish serious astronomy, which is a branch of physics, from the false claim to be able to know future contingents: those things which might or might not happen because they are dependent on individuals' wills, or those events which are fortuitous. Will I do any reading today or not?³²—for example. The study of causation in Nature (is thunder always followed by rain?) belongs to physics and has nothing to do with future contingents.³³ This said, the doctor who seeks to treat illness by looking into the planetary influences on his patients, is working within the frame of natural causes.³⁴ The problems in this field of where physics ends and becomes fraudulent, are muddy ones, overseen by the figure of Moses, mentioned at the end of this passage of the commentary, whose position is presumably not clear on what is authentic and what is not.³⁵ It may be that future contingents bear some echo for Abelard of the beginning of all things from the 'nod of God', an act of will on his side.³⁶ If so, this shared arbitrariness, human and divine, is wound together, in the going forward through time of the created world, with more followable and denser lines of causation. (Sterility

31 Le Goff, *Les intellectuels*.

32 *Hex.*, 194.1204–194.1209, 48. The discussion of the astrologers' art runs from 192–208, 47–51.

33 *Ibid.*, 198.1223–198.1231, 48: 'Futura uero contingentia naturę quoque dicuntur incognita, cum uidelicet ex nulla naturę operatione uel institutione prenosci queant.' Translation: "Future contingents in nature are also said to be unknown, clearly because they cannot be foreknown by any operation or law of nature."

34 *Ibid.*, 199–201, 49: 'Medici enim secundum complexiones corporum multa prenosceri de infirmis possunt [...].' Translation: "For doctors can know many things in advance from the way bodies are made up [...]." For the context of this discussion, in the first place that of the influence of the heavenly bodies on the various earthly bodies, and the effects of this on the weather, health and so on, see Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky, and Fritz Saxl, *Saturne et la mélancolie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), 266–267 and *passim*.

35 *Hex.*, 208.1286–208.1293, 50–51.

36 *Ibid.*, 119.801, 33: '[...] et iuxta philosophos omnia pondera nutu suo ferantur in terram.' Translation: "[...] and as the philosophers have it, all weights are carried down to the earth by God's nod."

after drought or excessive rain.)³⁷ And in his attention to this complexity, in the sceptical caution of this attention, Abelard introduces a falling away from early euphoria. The created world is aftermath: the second harvest, already touched with winter (to put it in words which are not his).

The Fall itself—which we have all been expecting—comes up first with the mention of apple trees, which really in this case (Abelard explains) means any kind of tree that gives fruit. “And the fruit-bearing tree with its power of bearing fruit of its own kind.” (*... Et lignum pomiferum faciens fructum iuxta genus suum*: Gen. 1, 12.)³⁸ This is the third day. Only fruit-bearing trees are mentioned. Does this then mean that the thorn bush was created as part of the fallen world? Are thorns a punishment for disobedience in Eden? Does it mean that trees that before sin gave fruit then became barren with the Fall? Might there have been trees that bore fruit in paradise, but, because of differences in climate, bore no fruit in certain other places? Abelard thinks the barrenness should probably be understood to mean having no purpose, useless. Or was there no change, no fall of the tree?³⁹ After all, the pruned branches of the vine, which would have slowed the growth of the fruit, make good fire wood. Something might be no good for one purpose, say that of producing fruit for the table, but good for another, such as providing wood for the fire.⁴⁰ From this patient fumbling for sense, for a literal sense in the words of Scripture, a symbol is glimpsed, fragile but appalling. Lacking the obvious power of liturgical symbol or of allegory to bring about an upward surge in the soul, to leap like John the Baptist in the womb, this quieter symbol does something which might be in its own way more disturbing, or at least give us more pause for thought: it seems to give evidence of a design from which, because of its intricacy and our obtuseness, we will always be estranged, but which is the persistence, ironic in its modesty, of the improbable moment of Creation into the present. The apple tree that became a thorn tree, or the existence of thorn trees after apple trees in the history of trees, sticks as what might be called a subdued symbol: subdued because only just evident above the more emphatic literal or historical sense. Apples, perhaps, really did turn to thorns. We are reminded forcefully that this is a commentary *ad litteram*. The thorn is symbolic in the subdued sense that it leads back into the text, the text of Genesis and then that of the Bible as a whole; and back into the course of history which this text recounts. Or perhaps it would be closer to say: it leads back into a striving to see what the

37 Ibid., 193.1202–193.1203, 47.

38 Ibid., 160.1016–160.1019, 40.

39 Ibid., 164, 41.

40 Ibid., 319, 73.

proper relation is between the words of the text and the facts as they were and have been. Allegory would depart from the text. Abelard himself gives examples in his brief section on allegorical interpretation. The six days of Creation are an allegory of the six ages of the world.⁴¹ Again, in several places elsewhere in his *Commentary*, he refers to a passage of Genesis as a 'type' of baptism. The spirit over the waters is one of these passages.⁴² This too is a form of allegory. Yet Abelard's insistence in his preface, and his painstaking attention almost throughout to the historical, make one wonder whether even this recourse to 'type,' to the habit of seeing typological echoes of the Old Testament in the New, instead of being an intrusion of the allegorising mind among the asperities of *historia*, might not rather be a flash-forward in the story, put there with the aim of knitting more tightly the intricate temporality of Biblical narrative, as if to show up the kinship of beginning and 'conservation' by the evacuation of time that comes of repetition, or of the collision of episodes, one from the Old and one from the New Testament (spirit over waters and baptism). Yet if allegory has this effect of knitting together story, the stress of Abelard's *Commentary* is on the story itself and the irreducible realities it tells of. ("There are plenty of ruined buildings in the world, but no ruined stones," wrote Hugh McDiarmid.)

For what Abelard has shown cumulatively and not just by the thorns, is that the *valde erant bona* of Genesis 1, 31, or the Platonic and philosophic idyll of Creation, is not of its own broad enough to measure up to the whole reality of the history. A bigger construction has to be put on it. A *ratio* is needed, or a wisdom, which is far more than the response to an idyll. It must be a measure of tragedy, and now Abelard characterises it as a tragedy which is in the very nature of man, arguing that the stories of Cain and all those between Adam and the giving of the law show man to be aware of what would offend God and unable not to offend Him despite this knowledge. The experience of history shows the rootedness of sin. This encompassing reason must be a measure of the tragic (as one might call it) and of its resolution too, for man is composite and has his eyes on the sky at the same time as his feet in the mud.⁴³ The

41 Ibid., 351–359, 80–82.

42 Ibid., 38.309–38.316, 15: 'Bene autem uentus aquis immissus, et eas sustollens ut uniuersum tegerent mundum, tipum nostrę regenerationis ex aqua et spiritu presignabat.' Translation: "It was well that the wind was sent down into the waters, and stirring them up so that they covered the whole world, foretold, as a type, our rebirth from water and the spirit."

43 Ibid., 456–458, 102–103. Had there been no precept against disobedience, there still would have been sin. I have used 'tragic' to say how sin is intrinsic to the human: 'Quod si etiam

resolution offered, however, is more a focusing on the problem, a sharpening and clarification of it, than a premature solution. The question has to be asked: how does the resolution come about? Can a reasoned account be given of it? Eileen Kearney is surely right. What we are given is an encounter with the word, not a disclosure of it. This kind of encounter, at once an admission of defeat and a constant stirring of the desire to understand, is what makes history what it is, and it is not irrelevant that the historians of Abelard's day were conscious of, even familiar with, the failure of meaning (Orderic Vitalis, Otto of Freising's *Gesta Frederici*).⁴⁴ But resolution perhaps also lies in the figure of Christ the philosophical story-teller, whose wisdom is in his story, and whose story is wide and exact enough to know every twist and turn, every intrigue of the truth. And thus Abelard points to the Gospel of John: "I saw you beneath the fig-tree," says this Christ to the bewildered Nathaniel, who has never set eyes on him before.⁴⁵

obicias neminem hominum peccatum, si illi primi homines non peccassent uel si preceptum obedientie nullum accepissent, nulla id ratione uel auctoritate roborari potest. Quis enim ex iustis parentibus ignoret pessimos nasci, uel e conuerso? [...] Quis denique nesciat per naturalem rationis legem sine precepto aliquo accepto nos posse cognoscere in quo deum offendere uel peccare possemus?" Translation: "If you object that no human would have sinned had those first humans not sinned, or had they been given no law of obedience, the objection cannot be sustained by reason or authority. Who can fail to know that the worst are born of just parents, and the best of the least just? [...] Who does not know that we have it in us to recognise, by the natural law of reason and without being given any precept, how we might offend God or sin?"

44 Thus Orderic, *Historia ecclesiastica*, ed. and trans. Marjorie Chibnall, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 13.45, vol. 6, 550 and 551: 'Ecce senio et infirmitate fatigatus librum hunc finire cupio, et hoc ut fiat pluribus ex causis manifesta exposcit ratio. Nam sexagesimum septimum aetatis meae annum in cultu Domini mei Iesu Christi perago, et dum optimates huius seculi grauibz infortuniis sibi ualde contrariis comprimi uideo, gratia Dei corroboratus securitate subiectionis et paupertatis tripudio. En Stephanus rex Anglorum in carcere gemens detinetur, et Ludouicus rex Francorum expeditionem agens contra Gothos et Gascones pluribus curis crebro anxiat' And so Orderic impotently abandons his labours in about 1141.

45 Ibid., 400.2399–400.2408, 90. The question addressed here (400–405, 90–91) is what species of tree the tree of the knowledge of good and evil might have been. Was it a vine (wine after all either sharpens or weakens the wits, and the bitterness of the grapes is fitting to life in exile from Eden)? Or a fig tree? 'Nonnullis tamen uisum est quod ficus fuerit, ex eo precipue quod postmodum referuntur illi parentes de foliis ficus perizomata sibi consuisse [...] Vnde et illud quod dominus respondit Nathanael querenti unde eum nosset, dicens: *Cum esses sub ficu, uidi te* [John 1,48], ita intelligi uolunt tamquam si dominus diceret "non modo michi primum notus esse cepisti, quem a principio in primis parentibus per seminarium existentem, per prescientiam noui." Translation: "To some, however,

Epilogue

The world is cracked, from murderous Cain to the thorn bush to tiresome fingernails that need paring all the time. But nothing in it is waste. Everything in it is good, and when all the single things that make it up are put together, including their development over time (for perfection is historical too), it is *valde bonum*. To catch hold of the complexity of this, its awkwardness, its requirement of a double take, it takes a creature as complex and as attentive, as composite as man. One thinks of Heloise, the recipient of this commentary, and of the Rule she follows in the Paraclete, with its instruction to “lend the ear of your heart.”⁴⁶ We can but listen.

it has seemed it must be a fig-tree, largely because we are told that later the parents sewed a girdle for themselves from fig-leaves [...] And these people have the idea that the words in which the Lord replied to Nathanael when he asked where He knew him from—‘It was when you were beneath the fig-tree I saw you’—have the meaning: ‘It’s not just now you became known to me. I have known you from the beginning, by the seeds planted in the first parents. I have known you by foreknowing you.’”

- 46 Orderic, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 307. See also the prologue in Benedict, *Rule of Benedict*, ed. Adalbert de Vogüé and Jean Neufville, Sources chrétiennes 181 (Paris: Cerf, 1972), 412: ‘Inclina aurem cordis tui.’ The relation of the monk to Creation, with the beginning, is for Abelard in a kind of historicity, an alert attention to the complex traces left by the beginning across the elapse of time. This comes up more clearly by contrast with the picture of monasticism as a return to the beginning, a ‘repetere suum principium,’ a shriving of time as it were, which is one of the great themes of the mid-twelfth-century *Speculum virginum*, ed. Jutta Seyfarth, CCCM 5 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1990). See the introduction, 50–55.

Abelard and the Poetics of *Ingenium*

Babette S. Hellemans

*Although the Word is common to all,
most men live as if each had a private wisdom of his own.*

HERACLITUS

For Abelard, everything depended on the instant power of the intellect.¹ This is as true of his philosophy as it is of his personal relationships. What distinguished his rejection of a certain model of knowledge from that of other thinkers was, above all else, the spirit or intention (*intentio*) in which it was done. Apart from his instant feeling of understanding, Abelard's intellectual spirit was deeply infused with the notion of being-in-time (*infra ambitum temporis*), that is, the recognition of how achingly open the desire for truth must remain in the context of human life. The link between the knowledge of a limited and organized reality and the not-knowing of a conceptualized reality is delicate.² In beginning to characterize styles of reasoning, then, the comfort zone of an unbroken *ratio* is alluring. But skepticism was no option for twelfth-century intellectuals either, as they had to deal with the pale state of a higher Truth. The semantic state of humanity (*in hoc statu*) is basically compositional in nature, says Abelard.³ Similar to Adam, who gave names to the animals in Genesis, the designation of things in the world can be either individually or severally. Hence something more than mere cognition was needed to be able to cope with the open wound of knowledge. Certainly, imagination (*imaginatio*) could help a great deal. It was even a requirement in order to fulfil the poetic expres-

1 I am grateful to Peter Cramer who helped me clarify some of the difficulties in the writing of this article.

2 Arnold Davidson's captivating essays (especially chapter 5, including Paul Veyne on Foucault and Wölfflin, and chapter 6 on Carlo Ginzburg) show some significant similarities concerning the paradigmatic issues that modern epistemologists share with our twelfth-century intellectuals, for example, the meaning of *energeia*. See Arnold Davidson, *The Emergence of Sexuality: Historical Epistemology and the Formation of Concepts* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

3 See L. M. De Rijk, "Antiek skepticisme en middeleeuws kriticisme," in *Middeleeuwse Wijbegeerte* (Assen: van Gorcum, 1981), 260–277 on the 'abhorrence of skepticism' in the medieval world-view and the (according to him) more historically accurate description of 'criticism' or 'probabilism.'

sion of this sacramental world, like the naming of a child in baptism. However, too much fantasy could lead to delusion. A twelfth-century theory of thought, however elegant and economical, suspended between knowing and not-knowing, is fragile. A quick reading of the relevant literature reveals that ideas about genius, quicksilver talent, or insight, are used more or less interchangeably. The particular meaning of each of these epistemological terms can be different, but the power of wit, where rationality and imagination work in tandem, comes close to what was generally considered a specifically innate talent (*ingenium*).⁴ There is not one single definition, however, that would cover the multifaceted nature of this epistemological concept. John of Salisbury says, quite bluntly, that there are three kinds of *ingenium*: “the first flies, the second creeps, and the third takes the immediate course of walking.” This third kind has a distinctive talent for philosophizing, it “provides prospect and walks right to the summit of true knowledge.”⁵

Abelard too, was interested in the ‘immediacy of walking’ couched in the concept of *ingenium*. The natural capacity to recognize that ‘being-in-time’ represents an open wound, however, means that the effect of this recognition cannot be rewound. For if a second chance were possible, allowing memory to function as a compound, the aching open desire for truth would be (re)stored. No desire or imagination, only the cleaving power of rationality would be profitable. But the pale state of humankind (*in hoc situ*) has no road back to Eden. In other words, if we were simply to honor the supremacy of *ratio*, the whole concept of a human condition *infra ambitum temporis* would implode, and innate talent would be nothing more than a cul-de-sac.

Instead, the paradigmatic aspect of Abelard’s *ingenium* envelops a desire for what has yet to be possessed. While time thickens and becomes viscous, how can man’s talent for creation operate as he walks, step-by-step, to the apex of creation? In the post-lapsarian human situation, where divinity sparkles but never rests, genius can be inflamed only momentarily; and this limitation is most palpable in language and human speech. Some have twelfth-century intellectuals recognizing illusion in Platonist claims of knowing: the illusion that they have managed more than a ‘gifted guess’ at understanding higher things. They get appropriately frustrated by Abelard’s acknowledgment of the

4 For an overview of the various ways in which *ingenium* is used, see Kathryn Lynch, *The High Medieval Dream Vision: Poetry, Philosophy, and Literary Form* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 34–45. Lynch emphasizes in her discussion of *ingenium* the poetical aspect, the symbiotic capacity of intellectual power and instantly seeing higher truth in matter and form.

5 *Ibid.*, 36.

gifted guess since the way in which divine reality intrudes on ordinary lives can be quite unsettling after hard labor, or because they claim to understand what spiritual poverty is. But Abelard's soul-map has the power to describe more than scattered sparkles of intellect, partly because it felt so much at home in Aristotelian logic and Stoic dialectic:

Prudence, that is the discernment of good and evil, is the mother of virtues rather than a virtue. To this belongs the making of dispositions on account of time or place or the dignity of persons. [...] For, as the philosophers [the Stoics] have decided, virtue should by no means be said to be in us unless it is a very good habit of mind or a habit of a well-constituted mind. Now what they call habit or disposition Aristotle carefully distinguished in the first species of quality, that is by teaching that those qualities which are not in us naturally, but come through our application, are called habits or dispositions: habits in fact, if they are difficult to move—such are, he says, the sciences or the virtues—but dispositions if, on the other hand, they should be easy to move. So if, according to this, any virtue of ours is to be called a habit, it does not seem absurd that sometimes the will ready to obey God, when it is easy to move before it is made firm, should not be called virtue at all, just as it should not be called habit. But whoever finish their life with this purpose of will should by no means be thought of as being damned. [...] Being made perfect in a short space, he fulfilled a long time.⁶

6 'Prudencia, id est, boni malique discretio, mater est uirtutum potius quam uirtus. Ad hanc pertinet pro tempore uel loco et personarum dignitate dispensaciones facere. [...] Vt enim philosophis placuit, nequaquam uirtus in nobis dicenda est, nisi sit habitus mentis optimus, siue habitus bene constitute mentis. Quid ureo habitum uel dispositionem dixerint, Aristoteles in prima specie qualitatis diligenter distinxit, docendo uidelicet eas qualitates que non naturaliter nobis insunt, set per applicationem nostram ueniunt, habitus uel dispositiones uocari. Habitus quidem, si sint difficile mobiles, quales, inquit, sunt sciencie uel uirtutes. Dispositiones uero, si e contra fuerint facile mobiles. Si ergo secundum hoc habitus sit dicenda quelibet uirtus nostra, non absurde uidetur nonnunquam uoluntas ad obediendum parata, cum sit facile mobile, antequam firmetur nequaquam dicenda uirtus, sicut nec habitus. Quicumque tamen in huius uoluntatis proposito uitam finirent, nequaquam dampnandi sunt estimandi. [...] Consummatus in breui, expleuit tempora multa.' See Sc., ed., trans., and notes Luscombe (1971), 128. Abelard quotes Boethius: *Boetii in Categorias Aristotilis liber iii*, in PL 64; 240–64; 241. Similar accounts can be found in Peter Abelard work, available in Thomas, ed., *Dialogus*, 115 and 168, as well as in *Sic et non*, ed. Boyer and McKeon (1976–1977), 144, cf. PL 178:1591ab.

Abelard does not say that disposition to knowledge or teaching is useless, but he implies that they are not very useful apart from a disposition as an initial impulse. It is inevitable, though, that, in theorizing about knowledge, at some point the notion of its origins remains obscure. Where does the virtue of knowledge start? The point is that the disposition to knowledge is not the same thing as the creation of knowledge as a medium to make sense of the world. The historical problem of knowledge is like any other: a chronology of something preceding the appearance of the thing called 'knowledge' itself. Yet this genesis of a virtue (rather than a habit) does not explain why it happened when and as it did. Abelard concludes: "being made perfect in a short space, he fulfilled a long time." We seem to understand this, but do we understand it? Abelard assumes that we know what it is that at any time 'perfection' can be 'fulfilled'. He mentions an initial urge as a disposition, and there may be such urges in all kinds of discoveries and perfections, but urges are themselves rather badly in need of explanation. Some idea of movement, the 'immediacy of walking,' preceded the cognition of knowledge itself. Significantly, Abelard does not mention 'memory' or 'recognition' as an important feature of a well-constituted mind. In this article I want to look more carefully at the 're' part of that 'cognition' in Abelard's thinking. I especially want to test the connection in his thought between the will to know and the aching shock that the desire for truth should be kept open-ended.

One of Abelard's great obsessions was the lack of connection or coherence between the individual and his use of common language—the fragmentation of word, thought and act. Subsequently, this lack may give us an inkling of his puzzling reconstruction of *intentio*. As far as the latter, *intentio*, is concerned, there are, of course, purely personal solutions of the problem, that is, when the acting and saying are produced by the same person in the realm of his own *ingenium*. My article will make use of *ingenium* as a key-concept in his epistemology, in order to lay bare the paradoxes in Abelard's language and thought. The concept is suited to this purpose, precisely because of the fact that its meaning is not at all clear at first sight. It has to be unearthed from the body of the text.

The example from the *Ethics* I just quoted is exemplary of Abelard's oeuvre in a broader sense. From it we can learn that tensions in his philosophy cannot only be explained by calling Abelard a person who is permeated with a (Neo-)Platonic or Aristotelian worldview. There are simply too many shifts and movements in his explanation, thought and teaching. True, Abelard gets from the Platonists, including Augustine, a philosophical idiom for articulating the distinction between the richly knowable world where God dwells and the mixed world of struggle between virtues and vices, a world of sin and senses

(the *saeculum*).⁷ For Abelard's purposes, however, the most reassuring thing to have ever happened in the history of philosophy is Aristotle's grip on the logical mechanics of language. The conviction that knowledge, or the epistemic equivalent of a return to God's richly knowable world, gives at least some shape to the aching open-ended desire to know.⁸

Through a radical analysis of language, Abelard managed to expose certain tensions latent in the twelfth-century *Weltanschauung* (including his own) between the nature of knowledge and the temporal modes of its organization and reception. Abelard's intellectual spirit is simultaneously and incessantly concerned with dialectics and rhetoric, describing the reality of grace in synchrony, as it were. By stripping down the chunks of language, he creates a notion of argumentation (*argumentatio*), showing the shifting sands of language, without forgetting that these shifts belong to a greater whole. The simultaneous presence of different mental tracks makes his intellect difficult to grasp. I should therefore now like to discuss the nature of Abelard's genius, and examine how he shaped the temporal contours of *what it is to know*, that is, the urgency of his 'walk'.

The Delineation of Language

In his critique of his opponents Abelard tries to overcome the temptation to turn to a false security—a turn that might be taken, he thinks, in reaction to intellectual changes in the molasses-like of a self-contained monastic culture—and to convince his Parisian audience that a solitary life of withdrawal is possible. This 'intellectual independence' is not romantic or individualistic, nor is it without risk. When we encounter Abelard in his writings and try to make philosophical sense of them as (we believe) the radical speculations they once were, we have to place them against the tacit understanding of his historical reputation.⁹ What makes this tricky is that, while Abelard put forth elements of his thought in a variety of argumentative modes, it is the *Historia calamitatum*, with its epistolary structure, that survives as the pre-eminent

7 I owe a huge debt to the insightful and beautifully written study on Augustine's notions on confession, sin, and the self, in James Wetzel, *Augustine: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York: Continuum, 2010). For the influence of Augustine on Abelard's thought, see the seminal Blomme, *La doctrine*.

8 Marenbon reads Abelard more optimistically than I do, concerning the possibility of knowing abstract things. See Marenbon, *The Philosophy*, 194–195.

9 In other words, Abelard is not a 'fourteenth-century nominalist.'

self-revealing text.¹⁰ Indeed, if we localize him in a historical period which, far from being a mere chronology of persons and works, is a structure in which Abelard plays a key role, we might come closer to a deeper narrative quality in which Abelard's genius may be understood differently. This is perhaps the trickiest part of all. Histories that begin with the inheritance of Augustine in medieval philosophy make Abelard seem less an originator of a theory of sin and will. The perspective of (Thomistic) scholasticism encourages a reading—a commonplace in scholarship—that leaves Abelard Aristotelian in his mind but Christian in his resolve; he becomes a peripatetic figure, the follower of an Aristotle without knowing the object of pursuit. But if Abelard were a proto-scholastic, an adept of a formal quality that comes of arranging the process of reason in a coordinated way, he becomes *de jure* the philosophical prophet with an academic bent, lifting philosophy out of the 'shady' realm of religion and placing reason back on track towards the bliss of a self-enquiring Humanism. His *Weltanschauung* (and in this sense too he is a prisoner of history) is to provide a logical validity for the arguments for God's existence. But the contours of his own existence have a recuperative shape: this is what I meant by starting to suggest that Abelard's intellectual spirit always had a rapport with the reality of being-in-time. It also brings us closer to the recognition of the achingly open desire for knowledge. What is deep in his philosophy, then, is the desire to run up against the limits of language, and, in connection with ethics, the desire to transcend the boundaries of reason while at the same time taking a stance that we might call a submission towards this reality of being-in-time. But it is not easy to pinpoint how Abelard bridges this abysmal reality. In recasting the order of knowledge closely along the life-line of a personally secured evidence, drawn from the Aristotelian logical order which in itself was borrowed from a pre-established metaphysics (we have to recall that Abelard didn't have the *Metaphysics* at his disposal), he created a new sense of philosophical justification, placing a doubting and hesitating self at its center: "by doubting we come to enquiry, and through enquiry we perceive the truth."¹¹ Nothing could have been more calculated to arouse the anger of a monk like Bernard of Clairvaux

10 We should ask ourselves why this is the case. How can it be that, for instance, the *Ethica* or *Scito teipsum* with its idiosyncratic interpretation of morality (and recognized as such by Abelard's own contemporaries) or his *Dialectics* with its traditional prepositional form of writing have not contributed in the same way to the historical appreciation of Abelard's intellectuality?

11 'Dubitanda quippe ad inquisitionem venimus; inquirendo veritatem percipimus.' See the preface in *Sc.*, available in Blanche Boyer and Richard McKeon, ed., *Sic et Non: A Critical Edition*, 103.

who had quite another construction in mind to bridge the ontological abyss. What then is to be said about Abelard's quest for the integration of logic and salvation, as the ordering motives of his entire oeuvre?

For the moment we need to bear in mind that the 'happy ending' in Abelard's personally secured evidence and life-line is not an apotheosis, and indeed will not be, not even in a near future, precisely because the process of building up this life-line depends too much on Abelard's temporal reality which does not rest upon one place, or one atomic moment.¹² This remark on the accidental character of human existence, including its rapport with the historicity of time, represents an essential element in his thinking and undermines the possibility of being anchored in the scholastic edifice of later centuries. We have seen a glimpse of this in the quotation from the *Ethics*, where we can read much more about it, so that Abelard comes to seem bent on obscuring the *raison d'être* of morality by tearing apart intention, will, language and sin. But Abelard's warning against recurrent human error checks the possibility of a complete self-awareness which would represent pride (*superbia* is always competing with God), one of the major sins in the predominantly monastic culture of the time.¹³ The sense of error and failure lurks here. To be sure, it is a long and bumpy road from the *Historia calamitatum* to the *Ethica* or *Scito teipsum*, or rather, when speaking chronologically, from the *Dialectica* to the *Ethica*. Thus it may be hard to imagine what general conclusions I could draw on the basis of one epistemological concept like *ingenium*, as the title of my article seems to suggest. I think that Peter Abelard was particularly concerned with seeing the veracity of language (its poverty representing the reverse side of the same coin), even within its most monumental form of Truth, always coordinated with the age-old question of whether the cosmic resides fundamentally either in events themselves or in an attitude towards events which

12 Suggesting that a topical argumentation indicates a connection between things (for example, Socrates, a stone, an animal) suggests that truth itself is subordinated to the existence of which it speaks. Thus, says Abelard, in order to constitute a syllogism that fits perfectly together, one should attribute the same category of truth and therefore a distinction should be made between ontology and language (without, for that matter, ascribing everything to either Plato or Aristotle). This process of melting categorical syllogisms in Aristotelian analysis together with stoic dialectics represents "l'échec d'Abélard," according to Jean Jolivet, *Abélard ou la philosophie dans le langage* (Paris: Éditions Seghers, 1969), 69.

13 On the illusion of absolute (self-)knowledge as a "stupid pride," see also Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 12.6.

means in the twelfth-century context the post-lapsarian condition of humanity in its most radical and 'impermanent' form.

I already pointed to Abelard's great obsessions with the lack of connection or coherence between the individual and his use of common language. Again, no single individual is equally gifted in all the departments of such a complex undertaking (the mastering of language, speech and morality would be like a juggler trying to keep three balls in the air). In most cases, therefore, says Abelard, the mastering of language is inferior to morality, or conversely, the mastering of morality is inferior to language, and this inequality tends to destroy the very principle of unity that *intentio* tries to establish. In order to realize a fusion of these aspects, something more is needed than a mere conjunction of the different aspects or the working toward a single point of reference (that is of the individual, of the understanding of God's grace); it is something that cannot be obtained by simply coordinating different personalities or different sides of one personality. The point that I would like to make here is that in approaching Abelard an essential element of the 'horizon of expectations,' to use Hans Robert Jauss' famous expression, is provided by the shape of some narrative historical continuum. That is, to begin to understand Abelard at all is to have already located him in what we believe would be the history of philosophy. And Abelard's *Historia calamitatum* plays an important—if disputed—role in the drama of this history of philosophy. Let's start reading this text as a philosophical understanding of the human drama it covers.

The Value of Knowledge

Imagine that Abelard's language were totally separate from knowledge or truth, and that he weaves words like threads into a textual unity. In that case his aim would be to invent a new texture of words that cannot be distinguished one from another. If this new textual creation is completely independent from truth, there is a risk that words become completely devoid of any real meaning. We can have an inkling of how this works when we read experimental poetry of the twentieth-century modernists, and their poems, where one specific word is, as it were, 'isolated' from its context. The (intentional) result is unsettling. Imagine now subsequently that Abelard not only separates language from truth, in creating a new kind of semantic texture, but that he also separates words from feeling. This is even more difficult to grasp. Suppose that I made a firm decision in my life never to lie in order to avoid the feeling of sin

(‘sorry, I really don’t like your new carpet’), would this also make me a better friend? So we now understand how in the same sentence words can be time-mortgaged (the carpet, money, and also friendship) and contrasted when they are valued in the context of eternal and mighty abstractions (sin, lie, truth). Not only do we *understand* how language works like shifting sands, we also *feel* the danger of getting drowned. I am not claiming that Abelard is weaving a semantic texture in which the words referring to the abstract truth are cut from the muddled and emotional use of words, as is the case in the effect of alienation when reading modern poetry. His aim is more philosophical. I believe that he is showing us the aporia of perfection. The intention of weaving a mixed semantic texture is that of a more perfect *ingenium*, but we humans are only able to comply briefly with such divine standards. When we aim to speak about true statements, like syllogisms, but deny ourselves the categories of salvation or redemption, we end up describing the zigzag movements of perfection. Thus Abelard gives Cicero’s *De officiis* as an example to explain that statements can be true or false according to the context, or in his *Ethics* he declares: “and so what’s surprising if, like them, we are not able to define the significance of the words, which is so unfixed?”¹⁴ On the verge of understanding and feeling we slowly start to grasp something of *ingenium*’s poetics.

But what does Abelard think of *ingenium*? Does it have an object? The movement of the type of intellect he describes is unanticipated. To understand something within a proleptic movement in which all is seen but not yet fully grasped, is to take into account the time-mortgaged context of language. The issue here is not whether abstractions can be conceived to have a rational basis in language (or not). Rather, he says, knowing that truth is separated from language and aching open, we have to acknowledge that the divine gift is never merited.¹⁵ And since the genial power of instant insight is part of the divine gift, how can such a thing be brought ‘home’ to the mundane and time-mortgaged use of language? This aporetic problem of *ingenium* as a specific epistemic category forces Abelard to think about knowledge’s value.

In the *Historia calamitatum* Abelard draws a picture of how ‘genius’ is confronted with the ‘common herd,’ how the uncommon mind is forced to change into an ordinary mind, cancelling out the problem of difference. In Abelard’s

14 Sc., 397, ed., trans., and notes Luscombe (1971); for the example of Cicero see Janet Coleman, *Ancient and Medieval Memories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 264.

15 Cf. the notion of free will in Augustine, *De libero arbitrio*, 1.16.34: “nothing but the will can depose the mind from its original place of authority and proper order.” Original: ‘De arce dominandi rectoque ordine.’ For the purpose of this article we cannot dig further into this problem, which is much more extended seen from the perspective of Abelard’s theory of intention.

attempts at withdrawal from the world we are offered a picture of isolation from the world, the repudiation of the capacity to improvise common significance. More technically oriented philosophers consider this refusal of sense making to be a philosophical failure, implying that Abelard is not yet able (as Thomas Aquinas would be some hundred years later) to distinguish the boundaries between logic, philosophy and theology because Abelard was not familiar yet with Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. I am less interested in qualifications, though, than in developing an idiom for describing the process by which Abelard arrives at his position, however broken that point may be. We can find plenty of idiomatic material when we observe the *Historia calamitatum*. We know that the *Historia calamitatum* (not the original title of the text) represents the first letter of a manuscript that contains the letters 'exchanged' between Abelard and Heloise, and ends with a monastic rule designed for nuns. Although the *Historia* is often considered as an isolated text, there now is a consensus of sorts that this first letter is just a part of an entire corpus. Of course, much more can and should be said about the structure of the entire manuscript, but the framing of this article calls for conciseness; so we will only focus on this first letter. Abelard's slippery presence in the margins of the philosophical canon is palpable in this first text. As the author of the *Historia calamitatum*, the author(s) create a meaningful textual unity from the events of a man named Abelard and the elements of his thought. The task of the reader is to comprehend the unity of this double-sided creation. All language, all forms of discourse, in fact all of Creation, are composite and temporal. Put reversely, *every* mode of discourse is ephemeral and without object. Whereas knowledge, speech and the self are one in God, the successive way in which humans speak is always extended, inclined to fragmentation. The post-Edenic uttering man is never wholly composed. This exerts a high pressure on the self. So, if the *Historia calamitatum* is literally the story of Abelard's life, it is also an account of a search for God. Although God is clearly present at the end of the first letter, the search itself continues in the letter exchange that follows and ceases at the resting point of a monastic way of life.

Learning to Confess

The first letter, the *Historia calamitatum*, begins with the theme of consolation. Remarkably, the writer of this first letter puts very little of his self-definition into consoling his 'brother in Christ':

[...] I propose to follow up the words of consolation I gave you, concerning the misfortunes I experienced, hoping thereby to give you comfort in

absence, so that comparing my misfortunes, you will find your own trials amount to little or nothing, and are therefore easier to bear.¹⁶

In his opening sentence the letter writer alludes to two fundamental sides of a specific kind of self-awareness. The first is that the reflective part of the author is rational, that is, he adds his reason in order to overcome sensibility (*temptationes*). Both shift in value, from the sensible to the rational, and things get better or worse. Clearly, mind and (bodily) senses are not made of the same stuff. So the utterance of the reflective mind cannot shift in keeping with the swings of the world of the body, for if the mind lost the power to endure, it would ultimately lose the self.¹⁷ This would be very serious indeed, for in that case the mind (the rational and reflective self) might lose its sense of morality and lose the *root of its intention*. In the *Ethica*, Abelard shows us the strange things that can occur if those two categories of rationality and sensibility are mixed up. True, rationality and sensibility interfere with one another but the 'thing' that endures, the self, cannot shift. The second side of self-awareness follows upon the first, and deepens further the ordinary and unreflected way the uttering self reflects, indeed even 'confesses.' If the first insight of the self is already strongly limited, we now add the awareness that the self is not a 'thing' capable of 'owning' a category as overwhelming as language.¹⁸ This is much more serious than the problem we encountered when we had to say something about our friend's carpet. The issue Abelard shows us here adds something existential to the human awareness of how we use, bend and mold language in an acceptable context. His point is now that language might entirely collapse *into the self*. As the post-Edenic uttering man is never wholly composed, the self can be fractured by the ambiguity of a time-mortgaged language and the mighty language of Truth. In other words, how can the mind avoid degenerating, as the body does in time, during the process of endurance, and continue making good judgments?

The usual scholarly account of the *Historia calamitatum* tends to isolate those two sides for the purpose of analysis. There is an analytical self, poured

16 'Unde post nonnullam sermonis ad presentem habiti consolationem, de ipsis calamitatum mearum experimentis consolatoriam ad absentem scribere decrevi; ut in comparatione mearum tuas aut nullas aut modicas temptationes recognoscas et tolerabilius feras.' See *HC*, available in Jean Monfrin, ed., 63. Unless otherwise mentioned, I am using the translation for *HC*, trans. Radice with Clanchy (1974), here 7.

17 Remember the distinction that Abelard makes between *de re* and *dictum (propositionis)*. This difference is explained very clearly in Marenbon, *The Philosophy*.

18 Hellemans, "The 'Whole Abelard,'" 349–376.

into an autobiographical kind of narrative, and there is the attempt to detail the architectonic structure of the work as if it were the *topos* of a letter of consolation. I do not deny the historical factualities in the text, nor do I disagree with the author's own claim that consolation might be needed. But I think that there is a movement in the text—and we focused only on the first few sentences, as a test—in which those two sides of self-awareness, especially its limitations, are experienced *by telling stories*. The need for digging up sentiments—a long way from Abelard's instinct for the ascetic use of language—has partly to do with his rhetorical shrewdness, but more directly, here, it shows just how ambiguous the feeling of contempt can be.¹⁹ There is a risk of a total breakdown of language, not only because of the way we speak, but because of the way we define ourselves: we are always learning to confess. We set out to console and find ourselves using contempt to do it. There is something hard to resist about the spectacle of someone else's calamities, as we all know from the sales figures for gossip magazines quoted on the stock exchange. On the way to damnation something in us stays vigilant, perhaps. Can the ascetic, on his way too, find a coherent language within a self, fractured by time and in danger of losing itself to the unreliability of words? Abelard shows us the two parts. To leave the theater of contempt, Abelard will have to play with ordinary language and to tell stories in order to make the deeper meaning of language more comprehensible. In the process of stripping down language, laying bare its shifting sands, we see how the two sides of self-awareness dance with each other in an iron tango.

Abelard is said to have cut through the human language to the divine by introducing such a thing as 'theology,' but it is questionable whether such a simple analysis would do justice to his work. In truth, the proponents of these interpretations have fallen victim to a ruse, for theology does not represent the divinity of language. Considering that the logic with which Abelard defends himself becomes nearly incomprehensible at times, because Abelard likes to reason up to the absurd, an antagonistic analysis of two layers of language might be too simple. Furthermore, Abelard himself has denied the existence

19 Cf. the similarities with Augustine's description of his experiences as a student, chapter 3 of the *Confessions*: "If the human calamities, whether in ancient stories or fictitious myths, are so presented that the theatregoer is not caused pain, he walks out of the theatre disgusted and highly critical. But if he feels pain, he stays riveted in his seat enjoying himself," in Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 36. See also Chadwick's footnote on this passage: "This passage is the most extended ancient discussion of tragic piety and catharsis, a theme famous since Aristotle [...]."

of a (mythical) key to the problem.²⁰ His work did not produce linguistic ambiguities because God speaks another language; the ambiguities *themselves* hold the true significance. His reasoning leads along a long and serpentine path of interpretation; ultimately, the path hits a dead end. Language is not synonymous with truth, and the interpreter emerges with nothing but silence. Abelard's *ingenium* reveals the incompleteness of language which together within time's significance characterizes the sentence.²¹ When he imagines us to have this limited tool of uttering sounds, of language, as all there is, even when we talk about the truth, Abelard lays his finger on the sore spot of the history of humanity.

Preoccupied with the structure of his narrative, the highly articulate Abelard in the *Historia calamitatum* seeks for a meticulous description of his past. He starts with a description of a cheerful boyhood in Brittany followed with an increasingly toilsome intellectual *Werdegang*, described in the shape of a 'coming of age' narrative to arrive at the end of his letter at his conversion (*conversio*) to monastic life, where the text is garnished with quotes from Jerome. In sum, Abelard "has ceased to seek men's favor and is become the servant of Christ."²² There are two things we need to reconsider before we can pursue our inquiry into the 'confessional mode' of the text, the lack of an object and the limits of language. Firstly, to say that Abelard's consoling words seem theatrical doesn't mean that they are not genuine, in the sense that he was putting up a show of self-pity.²³ The liminality, the state-in-between shifting sentimental and mental categories, is here rather a transformation, stepping into another sphere where contradiction is resolved and a new order is accomplished.²⁴ Thus, "in the days of Abelard, since he left his cradle" he puts the remote past behind him, the past of the first man Adam. Seen from this angle, the word

20 See his defense at Sens.

21 Sweeney, *Boethius, Abelard and Alan of Lille*, 77; Klaus Jacobi, "Abelard and Frege: The Semantics of Words and Propositions," in *Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Storia della Logica*, San Gimignano, 4–8 dicembre (Bologna: CLUEB, 1983), 81–96, here 89–90.

22 HC, ed. Monfrin (1959), 108: 'Desinit placere hominibus, et servus factus est Christi.' See also Jerome, "Epistulae," 45.6, PL 22:482, 327.

23 The confessional mode of the text has often led scholars to see in Abelard the birth of subjectivity. For more on the problem of subjecthood and self-pity see René Girard, "Narcissism: The Freudian Myth Demythified by Proust," in *Mimesis and Theory: Essays on Literature and Criticism, 1953–2005* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 160–175.

24 The term liminality is coined by the French ethnologist, Arnold van Gennep, *Les rites de passage* (Paris: Editions Nourry, 1909). For the English translation see Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).

'history,' in its most literal sense, seems out of place.²⁵ Secondly, the text suggests something more than a generalized lament over our mortal condition. The 'first consolation' is also the first of a series of consolations, reflections and rebuildings of a new life. Similarities in every sphere of human life—education, adulthood, sexual experiences and love, social acceptance and rejection, professional prosperity or disappointment—are drawn with a growing awareness that, upon closer inspection, the unblemished origin of all things is lost. The letter project is cumulative; dialectic, doubt and skepticism erode, but in time all is restored. At this point in time, when his days are finished—*his* not only pointing to Abelard but also to Adam, to a critique of the human situation, for there is no road back to Eden—another story begins that transforms the sphere of human life, similar to a *rite de passage*, into another state of mind. The lesson to be learned is that confining oneself to the anecdotal element in reading the *Historia* (or, for that matter, the *Ethica*), such a confinement would be to miscarry Abelard's sense. It would clutter up the stage of language and would do damage to the coherence of act, moral judgment and thinking. The restorative phase of the work, however, does not depend on a recognitive power of memory. Apparently, this is what his Parisian colleagues did not get about *ingenium*: knowledge or teaching are not very useful apart from the shock of recognition.

The Temporality of *Ingenium*

The most concrete moment at which Abelard seems to speak about *ingenium* holds center stage in the first part of the *Historia calamitatum*. The passage describes how the protagonist Abelard comes into contact with the scholarly environment of Scriptural exegesis in Paris, a world he describes as yet unknown to him. The passage, with its weave of monastic motifs, is tricky. The narrator tells us that he went from his native land in Brittany to France with the special purpose of studying divinity (*maxime ut de divinitate addiscerem*), just after both his parents radically changed their social status by adopting the monastic vow (*conversionem . . . ad professionem monasticam*).²⁶ The narrative then vividly reproduces the interaction of different scholarly backgrounds, and

25 In other words, would the claim of ascribing a phrase in a given text to so and so, recognizing conventional motives and intertextuality, relieve us of the task of understanding the originality of a new structure?

26 HC, ed. Monfrin (1959), 67: 'Dum vero hec agerentur, karissima mihi mater mea Lucia repatriare me compulit; que videlicet post conversionem Beregnarii patris mei ad professionem monasticam, idem facere disponebat.'

in particular the contrast between the young Abelard and his old master. One of the principal institutions for education at the time was the school of Laon (some 100 miles away from Paris) where Anselm was a venerated authority. As Constant Mews argues in his article in this volume, it seems that Abelard owed much of his scholarly training to this 'school'. The moment on which I would like to focus in the *Historia* is when the authority of Anselm erodes in the eyes of Abelard, who thought that while Anselm's command of words was remarkable, "[their] meaning was devoid of all sense." The mode of this passage is carefully structured to its lowest ebb:

I had come to this tree [Anselm] to gather fruit, but I found it a fig tree which the Lord cursed, or the ancient oak to which Lucan compares Pompey: there stands the shadow of a noble name, like a tall oak in the field of corn, etc.²⁷

Within the structure of the narrative, Lucan's quote (interwoven with a quote from Matthew) functions as a hinge, allowing the writer to introduce a new narrative mode, carrying an air of change:

Once I discovered this I did not lie idle in his [Anselm's] shade for long. My attendance at his lectures gradually became more and more irregular, to the annoyance of some of his leading pupils, who took it as a sign of contempt for so great a master. They began secretly to turn against me, until their base insinuations succeeded in rousing his jealousy. One day it happened that after a reading of the *Sentences* we students were joking amongst ourselves, when someone rounded on me and asked what I thought of the reading of the Holy Scripture (*divinorum lectione librorum*), when I had hitherto studied philosophy.²⁸

27 Ibid., 68: 'Ad hanc itaque cum accessissem ut fructum inde colligerem, deprehendi illam esse ficulneam cui maledixit Dominus, seu illam veterem quercum cui Pompeium Lucanus comparat dicens: Stat, magni nominis umbra, qualis frugifero sublimis in agro, etc.' See also *HC*, trans. Radice with Clanchy (1974), 7. Cf.: Matthew 21:18–21:22; Lucan, *Pharsalia*, 1, 135–136.

28 *HC*, ed. Monfrin (1959), 68: 'Hoc igitur comperto non multo diebus in umbra ejus ociosus jacui; paulatim vero me jam rarius et rarius ad lectiones ejus accedente, quidam tunc inter discipulos ejus eminentes graviter id ferebant, quasi tanti magister contemptor fierem. Proinde illum quoque adversum me latenter commoventes, pravis suggestionibus ei me invidiosum fecerunt. Accidit autam quadam die ut post aliquas sententiarum collationes nos scholares invicem jocamur. Ubi cum me quidam animo intemptantis interrogasset quid mihi de divinorum lectione librorum videretur, qui nondum nisi in philosophicis studueram [...]': See also *HC*, trans. Radice with Clanchy (1974), 7.

The main character of this passage is undoubtedly confident, almost in a way that is not native to our way of behaving and self-performance. Socially, we cannot behave as bluntly as the figure Abelard does in this passage; we would need more diplomacy. At the same time, something in the passage gives us the idea of seeing Abelard's world through the limpid waters of a brook, a world that—unbelievably, almost mythically—is unbroken and self-contained, conducted away from the peering eyes that surrounded Abelard the troublemaker. His narrative, directed to an imaginary friend—perhaps to God too—offers some insight along the lines that self-contempt can be healthy since the material of language is never perfect. The stuff of language is not made in a way that allows us to use different strings of language emerging in one moment and time. This 'chronotopic' problem of language, to use the term coined by Bakhtin, is immanent to knowledge, as a thing in which past experience, present accomplishment and yet-to-be goals are intertwined.²⁹ The segments of language that capture the moment of insight are not sharply defined: shifting sands. Within the episodic bubble, there is no reference to a diachronically anchored context.³⁰ Abelard is bored stiff, he plays truant. A life in school, though perhaps less desperate in its comfort and structure than the alternative, that is, a life without scholarly knowledge, seems no less needy. But what is knowledge worth without the capacity of remembering things (*memoria*)? Abelard has very little to say about this. Memory training was an essential feature in the tradition of the *disciplina claustralis* as an imitation of the apostolic life, and whether Abelard may be called a monk or not (e.g. the *moine manqué*)

29 Mikhail Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes Toward a Historical Poetics," in *The Dialogical Imagination*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: Texas University Press), 84–258, esp. 85: "The chronotope [...] has an intrinsic generic significance. It can even be said that it is precisely the chronotope that defines genre and generic directions, for in literature the primary category in the chronotope is time. The chronotope as a formally constitutive category determines to a significant degree the image of man in literature as well. The image of man is always intrinsically chronotopic."

30 In J. T. Muckle, *The Story of Abelard's Adversities: A Translation with Notes from the Historia Calamitatum*, preface Étienne Gilson (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1964), 22, n. 22, the author goes as far as to suggest that Abelard considered the meaning of the *Sentences* as "[...] to imply that there is no need of such a method in the study of the Scriptures by a man of education. He can read and understand them with the help of a commentary [*expositor*] by himself. In view of Abelard's important place in the development of the scholastic method, it is difficult to see his consistency. Perhaps with his usual perspicacity, he is quite right when he says that most of his troubles were caused by his pride." Hopefully it will now be clear to the reader that I consider this interpretation rather naive.

he certainly was familiar with at least the fringes of this 'discipline'.³¹ But for Abelard there is another way of thinking about memory. Within the logic of mixed perfection, Abelard heavily relies on his talent, of being a man at the apex of creation. The operation of memory, universal by experience, is also part of being such a man. But would it be a good thing to leave all the windows of the mind constantly open and to remember all the stored images of the mind, including nightmares? True, describing analogical human experiences may help to cure, but not all will be absorbed in oblivion.³² Memory has its scars. Yet, says Abelard, whatever images we have from the past, the truth of the intellect cannot make a backwards movement to those images, since intellectual truth is not temporally relative. The present attention of the mind is giving meaning to those past images, and discerns the different meaning of words that signify the world.³³ The way in which the mind *recollects*, then, plays an important, all-embracing part in the unfolding of Abelard's *ingenium*. Let's read further:

I replied that concentration on such reading was most beneficial for the soul, but that I found it most surprising that for educated men the writings or glosses of the Fathers themselves were not sufficient for interpreting their commentaries without further instruction. There was general laughter, and I was asked by many of those present if I could or would venture to tackle myself. I said I was ready to try if they wished. Still laughing, they shouted 'Right, that's settled! Take some commentary on a little known text and we'll test what you say'. Then they all agreed on an extremely obscure prophecy of Ezekiel. I took the commentary and promptly invited them all to hear my interpretations the very next day.³⁴

31 Willemien Otten, "In Conscience's Court," in *Virtue and Ethics in the Twelfth Century*, ed. I. Bejczy and R. Newhauser, Brill's Studies in Intellectual History (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 59.

32 Describing human experiences as analogies for a universally shared memory is reminiscent of Augustine.

33 Cf. Abelard's notion of *status* explained in his *LI*. See also Coleman, *Ancient and Medieval Memories*, 271–273.

34 *HC*, ed. Monfrin (1959), 69: '[...] respondi: saluberrimum quidem hujus lectiones esse studium ubi salus anime cognoscitur, sed me vehementer mirari quod his qui litterari sunt ad expositiones sanctorum intelligendas ipsa eorum scripta vel glose non sufficiunt, ut alio scilicet non egeant magisterio. Irridentes plurimi qui aderant an hoc ego possem et aggredi presumerem requisierunt. Respondi me id si vellent experiri paratum esse. Tunc inclamantes et amplius irridentes: 'Certe', inquit, 'et nos assentimus'. Queratur itaque et tradatur vobis expositor alicujus inusitate scripture, et probemus quid vos promittitis.' Et

The 'very next day' suggests that Abelard has the memory of an elephant, or that he has been working the whole night. Since he is not claiming either of these options, perhaps something different is at stake, something that goes beyond the notion of knowledge as a thing we are able to possess. It is part of the elliptical fascination of the *Historia calamitatum* that Abelard's paradigmatic dealing with his *ingenium* resembles chewing gum. In the mouth, it takes different shapes, and at the same time it can never be wholly digested. In the entanglement with the eternal verities of the Word and the person being-in-time, 'doomed' to live with the rest of the world, Abelard shows the epistemology of abstract categories in historical realities. There are no signs of promises, only one disaster after another, occurring to the tragic self that is not able to know ahead of time. These two things—that the senses can deceive and that the endurance of the intellect is at stake—are together sufficient to demonstrate the general doubtfulness of knowledge. The episodic bubble containing the representation of Abelard's *ingenium* is not about boasting pride (cf. the Preface in the *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*), nor about the necessity of social acceptance. Rather, the episode touches upon epistemology and the desire for knowledge. Certainly, Augustine, in his personal quest, was more explicit: "I sought an object for my love; I was in love with love, and hated safety and a path free of snares."³⁵ But Augustine's provocative pen of worldliness to describe a life dedicated to God is perhaps not that far from Abelard's. Let's read further in the same passage:

They started to give me unsolicited advice saying that I should not hasten to such a task, but inexperienced as I was, I should take a longer time to establish and confirm my interpretation. I indignantly replied that it was not my custom to advance through practice but through talent (*ingenium*), adding that either they were not to object to coming to hear at me at the time of my own choosing or else I would break the bargain.³⁶

consenserunt omnes in obscurissima Hiezechielis propheta. Assumpto itaque expositore statim in crastino eos ad lectionem invitavi.' See also *HC*, trans. Radice and Clanchy (1974), 7–8.

35 Augustine, *Confessions*, 3.1, 1.

36 *HC*, ed. Monfrin (1959), 69: 'Qui invito mihi consilium dantes, dicebant ad rem tantam non esse properandum, sed diutius in expositione rimanda et firmanda mihi hanc inexperto vigilandum. Indignatus autem respondi non esse mee consuetudinis per usum proficere sed per ingenium; atque adjeci vel me penitus desitutum esse, vel eos pro arbitrio meo ad lectionem accedere non differe.' See also *HC*, trans. Radice and Clanchy (1974), 8.

'Inexperienced,' it says, but inexperienced in what? Abelard surely remembered his Bible. Is it about the commentaries taught at school, a kind of knowledge he didn't possess? In the wake of his quest for God, turning to an objectless knowledge, Abelard replays for himself his 'experience' elsewhere. The task before him is to report about when he has started to become, in some respect, a stranger to his later ascetic self. In the process he starts to explain his 'arriving' at the Scripture:

At my first lecture they were only a few, as all considered it ridiculous that I, utterly unlearned in sacred science, should attempt this so hastily. But those who did attend thought my lecture so good that they praised it highly and constrained me to comment on the text in the same vein as that in which I had lectured. When those who had not attended heard this, they vied with one another in getting my second and third lectures, and all alike were anxious to make a copy of the glosses which I had begun the first day.³⁷

Three days of hard teaching labor, and an increasingly eager public trying to take notes. The text finishes here, and starts with a new paragraph "about his persecution against him" (*de persecutione eius quoque in eum*). 'His' is Anselm of Laon. To get a better grip on the poetics of Abelard's *ingenium* we will need to know some more details about the meaning of this 'persecution'.

This old man [Anselm] was now inspired by bitter envy and spurred on by the urgings of some against me, as I mentioned before, began to persecute me for my lectures in divinity with the same enmity as my master William had done in philosophy. There were then in the school of this aged man two students who appeared to excel, Alberic of Rheims and Lotulph the Lombard, who were the more incensed about me as they thought highly of themselves. Moved especially by the suggestions of these two, as I afterwards learned, that old man arrogantly forbade me to continue in the place where he was teaching the work of interpretation

37 HC, ed. Monfrin (1959), 69: 'Et prime quidem lectioni nostre pauci tunc interfuere, quod ridiculum omnibus videretur me adhuc quasi penitus sacre lectionis expertem id tam prope aggredi. Omnibus tamen qui affluerunt in tantum lectio illa grata extitit ut eam singulari preconio extollerent, et me secundum hunc nostre lectionis tenorem ad glosandum compellerent. Quo quidem audito, hii qui non interfuerant ceperunt ad secundam et terciam lectionem certatim concurrere et omnes pariter de transcribendis glosis quas prima die inceperam in ipso earum initio plurimum solliciti esse.' Translation by author.

which I had entered upon. He gave the excuse that I might perhaps in that capacity write something erroneous, as I was unschooled in that branch, an error that would be imputed to him.³⁸

All this looks like the talent of a Prodigal Son whose soul and existence were destitute, alienated from God.³⁹ Abelard begins replaying the theme of his destitution, reconstructing his ascent through the lowest moment of his life, which is yet to come and to which he alludes here: the episode of the Council of Soissons. The ‘some against me,’ including the two best students present, would be his opponents by then, as we read further on in the *Historia*. We may continue reading more about the events of this tragedy, but this would not necessarily bring us closer to the ‘poetics’ of *ingenium*. For that we need to keep an eye on the temporality of the narrative.

So far, Abelard the Prodigal Son has emphasized the inner unfolding of his desire for divine matters, and not the divine gift (*ingenium*) that snatches him away from his familiarity with the worldly context. True, it would be a thousand times better to keep the moment of knowledge, speech and being together—a comfortable chronotopical bubble—but, then, there is the limitation of language. With the present attention of the mind at its center, knowledge is *recollected*, but only partially. Sounds, words, and interpretations, they are all extended and soon dead. Texts are nothing more and nothing less than significations of events: “it was necessary that object lessons from the histories be added, in which both the reward for those who obey and the punishment for those who transgress are placed before [the people’s] eyes”, he says in his Prologue on the *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*.⁴⁰ In other words, rather than showing pride, Abelard is showcasing what a mutable mind

38 *HC*, ed. Monfrin (1959), 69–70: ‘Hinc itaque predictus senex vehementi commotus invidia et quorundam persuasionibus jam adversum me, ut supra memini, et tunc stimulatus, non minus in sacra lectione me persequi cepit quam antea Guillhelmus noster in philosophia. Erant autem tunc in scholis hujus senis duo qui ceteris preminere videbantur, Albericus scilicet Remensis et Lotulfus Lombardus; qui quanto de se majora presumebant, amplius adversum me accendebantur. Horum itaque maxime suggestionibus, sicut postmodum deprehensum est, senex ille pertubatus impudenter mihi interdixit inceptum glosandi opus in loco magisterii qui amplius exercere, hanc videlicet causam pretendens, ne si forte in illo opere aliquid per errorem ibi scriberem, utpote rudis adhuc in hoc studio, ei deputaretur.’ *HC*, trans. Radice and Clanchy (1974), 8 (adapted).

39 This is a theme in Porphyry, *Sententiae ad intelligibilia ducentes*. About the reception of Porphyry’s *Sententiae*, see A. C. Lloyd, in *Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967).

40 *Comm. Rom.*, trans. Cartwright (2011), 85.

means. He adds reason to sensitivity. For the sake of precision we should finish reading this paragraph. It ends as follows:

When this [story about their *magister* forbidding Abelard to teach divine matters in Laon], reached the ears of the students their indignation knew no bounds—this was an act of sheer spite and calumny, such as had never been directed to anyone before; but the more open it was, the more it brought me renown, and through persecution my fame increased.⁴¹

Through persecution, Abelard's fame increases. The usual complaint against Abelard the perfectionist is his subversive nature. For the moment things will turn more favorable to Abelard as he enters Paris with a strong reputation concerning his intellect. But in the (monastic) intellectual world of the twelfth century, this kind of fame always predicts more trouble. He will first become the popular teacher who meets Heloise, and we all know this would "procure the fruit of death"—of sin, that is (Rom. 7.5).⁴² But our reading is not about episodic bubbles, or fruits. The point, of course, that I have been trying to dramatize, is that Abelard does not succeed in providing himself with an alibi for divine grace. So far, I have had my eyes mainly on the empathic side. He managed to get me in his rhetorical trap of consolation. Now I would like to attend more closely to the remark I made earlier, about the uncertainty of his object: who is consoling whom? It is easy enough to blame the writer for his impudent disregard of his fellow man. But here is the problem: this is all subjectivism. As Abelard is showing, God's gift (*ingenium*) is a matchless judgment. The two categories—divine gift and human babble—will never meet, and the road to Eden is under embargo. His 'subjective' defensiveness behind the exegetical strategy of the *ingenium*-passage seems natural but is, in fact, completely artificial. Significantly, the *Historia* does not go on to defend further the content of his comments on Ezekiel. It only mentions some lines later that Abelard 'finished the commentary begun at Laon' and that he developed the 'desire

41 HC, Monfrin (1959), 70: 'Quod cum ad aures scholarium pervenisset, maxima commoti sunt indignatione super tam manifesta livoris calumpnia, que nemini umquam ulterius acciderat. Que quanto manifestior tanto mihi honorabilior extitit et persequendo gloriosorem effecit.' HC, trans. Radice and Clanchy (1974), 8.

42 Cf. Augustine, *Confessions*, 3.3, 5; trans. Chadwick, 37: "I pursued a sacrilegious quest for knowledge, which led me, as a deserter from you, down to faithless depths and the fraudulent services of devils. The services I offered them were my evil acts. And in all this I experienced your chastisement. During the celebration of your Church, I even dared to lust after a girl and start an affair that would procure the fruit of death."

for lectures in both branches,' that is, of philosophy and divine matters. The avowed intent in the *Historia* is to detail the beginning, the middle and the anticipated end of the theatrical tragedy of Peter Abelard's 'calamities': an end, after which a proliferating letter exchange on monastic life starts.

The Turn to Oblivion

Let's recapitulate some of the statements I have made in this article. I started with the shifting sands of language, its limitations as well as its mixed texture. I pointed out the hermeneutical problem of merely focusing on 'episodic bubbles' in the narrative, because of the double-sided problem of the self and the problem of original sin. I turned to the passage in the *Historia* describing the theatricality of *ingenium*, to look at its shifts and movements. We read how blinkered moments of mental awareness were surrounded by a fog of memory and bookish knowledge, leaving Abelard looking like the biblical Prodigal Son without a context. After all this, it can scarcely be denied that Abelard the writer is an unrepentant ascetic. For now, and in closing, I want to suggest that Abelard's true genius does not lie in his linguistic speculations bordering on the absurd. It rather lies in his thinking about the withdrawal from language. The turn to his life's great question, that of asceticism, not only the physical aspect of withdrawal but also its linguistic reductionism, is supposed to be the consolation for his stirred emotions. Having some sense of the good he had lost with the loss of himself, he lives on wondering what remains of his former self.

The arrangement of the events as described in the letters presupposes, however, that Abelard's sorrow over his past life is quite unlike his homecoming in a different world. And then what is cognition's virtue? Perhaps one can speak of the suffering of experience, as texts will differ in the extent to which, and in which ways, they have to provide for themselves their opposite virtues. When, in the *Historia*, Abelard alludes to his future condemnation, quoting St Paul: "Knowledge makes humble," what would that mean in terms of the intertwining of Abelardian melancholy and epistemology?⁴³ Is there not something in his texts that seeks to provide the analysis of 'knowledge,' rather than—what seems less controversial—showing the importance of the concept, indeed *the act of knowledge*, thus hinting at its significance to failure?⁴⁴ I guess this is why

43 HC, ed. Monfrin (1959), 71: 'Scientia inflat' (1 Corinthians 8:1).

44 I have been very much influenced by Stanley Cavell's work concerning the analysis of 'disclaiming knowledge,' and as its sequel, some self-defeating aspects in the nature of skepticism, see, for instance, Stanley Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge: In Six Plays of Shakespeare*

the common approach to Abelard's genius, covering it with a pseudo-romantic and individualistic veil and reducing it to a perfectly intellectual form of life, does not quite satisfy me. If we leave the question of Abelard's voice open and try to 'listen to Abelard,' we might come closer to what he thought was the meaning of Adam's sin as decoupled from Eve—and Abelard's sin as decoupled from Heloise—for "Adam was not led astray but his woman was" (*De civ. Dei* 14.11). Imagine that Abelard was preoccupied with the question of what it is to understand, with the question of rationality as a discretion of attention to different aspects of the same thing.⁴⁵ And imagine further that his aim was not to reform but to show the confusion between different layers of knowing.⁴⁶ The lower Adam—which is in the twelfth-century sense the lower 'universal self'—is not being given to profound self-reflection, but from another and much higher perspective, he is trying to perfect his union with his body being-in-time, the thing he thinks of as his essential form. This inner conflict being perpetual there will be no firm 'yes or no'. The looming question in Abelardian studies, certainly with regard to his notion of intention and original sin, is whether he denies not merely the human law (*lex*) but also the possibility of a philosophically secured self, that is, of a kind of 'denied' self in the sense that sin can only be defined as absence.⁴⁷

Knowledge of the self in the world represents, for the *Socratic chrétien*, always more than an introspection of each person into his or her own self.⁴⁸ To account for the steadfastness of this massive truth is essential in the twelfth-century culture. Perhaps this is where Abelard's striving as he shapes an ascetic life can be felt most violently. His radical sense of language, his reductional account, thickens as he stumbles over the general and self-contained claims

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) or Stanley Cavell, *In Quest for the Ordinary: Lines of Skepticism and Romanticism* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1988).

45 Peter Abelard, *Glossae Super peri Hermeneias* [*Gl. Super peri h.*], ed. by K. Jacobi and C. Strub, 329, 25–26.

46 Sweeney, *Boethius, Abelard and Alan of Lille*, 76–77.

47 Sc., 3, ed. trans., and notes Luscombe (1971), 6: 'cum itaque peccatum diffinimus abnegative, dicentes scilicet non facere vel non dimittere quod convenit, patenter ostendimus nullam esse substantiam peccati quod in non esse potius quam esse subsistat, veluti si tenebras diffinientes dicamus absentiam lucis ubi lux habuit esse.' See also Maurice de Gandillac, "Intention et loi dans l'éthique d'Abélard," in *Pierre Abélard—Pierre le Vénérable. Les courants philosophiques, littéraires et artistiques en Occident au milieu du XII^e siècle, abbaye de Cluny du 2 au 9 juillet 1972* (Paris: CNRS, 1975), 585–610.

48 The intertwinement of Graeco-Roman and Christian traditions in the multilayered vision of the Self in Western Europe is best explained in the classic Pierre Courcelle, *Connais-toi, toi-même: De Socrate à Saint Bernard*, 3 vols. (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1975).

with regard to divine language. The incompleteness of language combined with his account of the fact that the attention of the soul is discrete (philosophically speaking), makes it logically impossible to create harmony. Even the ascetic mind, set on meditation, cannot escape from this simultaneous movement of dialectic and equilibrium. Where logic always resolves itself and is limited to the exceptional conditions of the proposition, the strategy of ordinary language is not to argue for the exceptional status of language but to show its multifaceted nature.

This being so, the consolation must be without the element of personal loss, the friend must be a friend not a fiction, and the letters must represent a dialogue, not an echoed monologue. In fact Abelard's writings give us good reason to think that his framing of the 'ascetic question' was still that of a spectacle. Abelard wants us to compare the theatricality, on the stage of humanity, of our own calamities and to compare them with his—and to be unmoved by both. His confessional movement actually knocks the bottom out of a tragic and narcissistic theater. No pride, no glory, no calamities. If we can appreciate how his confessional account works against the rhetorical manipulation of empathy we may be less tempted to fall into his emotional trap, and start to feel the universal impact of human sin and more likely to appreciate his ascetic answer. The hard part will be to feel for the logical nature that lies beneath his answer. Perhaps the response might sound like this: it is not the scholarly system of checks that occasions the divine reading, but the divine that stirs in a person—the trust that the God of love is still out there and even within. Man's linguistic ambiguity is universal and ordinary rather than having to do with particulars, and even a *moine manqué* cannot escape from this. The logic of this kind of parenting between the human and the divine defies the discretion of the attentive soul to attend to different aspects of the same thing, to *ingenium* itself. True, there is something in this insight that seeks for strong terms. It is reminiscent of what the artist Delacroix said about Beethoven: 'This is the work of a madman or a genius and since this is in doubt, I am plumping for genius.'

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Abbreviations

CCCM	Corpus christianorum, Continuatio mediaevalis. Turnhout: Brepols, 1966–.
CCSL	Corpus christianorum, Series latina. Turnhout: Brepols, 1953–.
CSEL	Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum. Vienna: Tempsky, 1866–.
PL	Patrologiae cursus completus, series latina. J.P. Migne (ed.). 217 vols. Paris: Migne, 1844–1855.

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